

SECTION IV. STUDIES AND MATERIALS

Pierre Broué †

Institut d'études politiques de Grenoble

France

(translated by Brian Pearce †)

The International Oppositions in the Communist International. A Global Overview

Editors' introduction

This unpublished text by Pierre Broué (1926–2005), eminent French historian of international communism and Leo Trotsky, and avid contributor to the International Newsletter, was written under the title “The International Oppositions in the Comintern” in the 1990s for a planned, yet not implemented publication project of the International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam. It was translated into English by British historian Brian Pearce (1915–2008). The typescript survived in Bernhard H. Bayerlein’s private collection, and as this text is not available anywhere in English, we decided to publish it here for the first time. Broué’s contribution is much more than the modest title suggests. His essay is not just a history of the oppositions within the Comintern, but a global overview and synthesis of oppositional currents in international communism in the 1920s, from the US to Indochina, from Switzerland to South Africa. Even though it has been written before the opening of several archives which are accessible today, such a global overview, combined with Broué’s poignant analysis, still can greatly benefit today’s researchers.

*We have left the text and the footnotes intact, merely adjusting the references to the International Newsletter’s citation style, correcting minor typos, and adding page numbers to the references to contributions in Cahiers Léon Trotsky, the scholarly journal edited by Pierre Broué. In this regard, Wolfgang and Petra Lubitz’s Pierre Broué Bibliography, available at http://www.trotskyana.net/Trotskyists/Pierre_Broue/Pierre_Broue_Bibliography.html, has proven very helpful. Additional footnotes by the editors are marked with * and set in italics.*

A history of the oppositions in the Communist International (Comintern) would call for several volumes. I shall confine myself to the international oppositions.

An *international* opposition I define as being an opposition which is based on an international programme and which carries on its activity, if not in all sections of the Comintern, at least in several, and aims to organise itself in all of them.

Two oppositions fit this definition: the Left opposition and the Right opposition. The Left opposition existed as a reality for ten years. It functioned not only as a tendency, at its beginning, but subsequently as a faction within the Comintern, and figured in all the important moments of the Comintern's history down to 1933. Born later, the Right opposition was more of a federation of groups, did not always have a clear-cut position, and gradually disappeared.

There are no specific archives for the history of these oppositions, and the relevant documents are to be found in the archives of the Comintern and its sections. Particular mention, though, must be made of the Trotsky Archives at Harvard and the Sedov Archives at Stanford,¹ and also, perhaps, when they become accessible, the Lovestone Archives at Stanford.* The essential information concerning the Left opposition is given in works devoted to Trotsky.² I shall allow myself merely to refer to two of my own articles³ and to the only work that deals with the question on the international scale, the book by Damien Durand,⁴ which, however, is unfortunately restricted in the period it covers. The only synthetic work on the Right opposition is Robert J. Alexander's.⁵

1. *The Left Opposition*

Born of the prestige and inspiration of Leon Trotsky, at first it simply followed in his wake, and some of its groups were no more than "letter-boxes".

The Russian Left opposition is the best known. It began in 1923 with the "Letter of the 46", which has recently been published in the USSR.⁶ This was written by a group of people who were close to Trotsky and knew of his concern about the regime in the Party. This opposition functioned until the XIIIth conference of the Russian Communist Party (of the Bolsheviks) (*Rossijskaja kommunističeskaja partija (bol'shevikov)*; RKP (b)) as a tendency, refraining from any sort of factional conduct – which made easier the task of the apparatus, especially in

¹ Most of the information concerning the Left opposition is based on these archives, and no detailed references will be given, when the source is Harvard, as such notes would take up many pages.

* *The papers of Jay Lovestone, located at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, are open for research by now, see <https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4q2nb077/>.*

² Cf. Pierre Broué: *Trotsky*, Paris, Fayard, 1988.

³ Pierre Broué: *Les trotskystes en Union soviétique (1929–1938)*. In: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* (hereafter: CLT) (1980), 6, pp. 5–65; and id.: *Compléments à un article sur les trotskystes en U.R.S.S.* In: *CLT* (1988), 24, pp. 63–72.

⁴ Damien Durand: *Opposants à Staline. L'opposition de gauche internationale et Trotsky 1929–1930*, Grenoble, Pensée Sauvage, 1988. = *La Pensée*

⁵ Robert J. Alexander: *The Right Opposition. The Lovestoneites and the International Communist Opposition of the 1930s*, Westport CT, Greenwood Press, 1981.

⁶ *Izvestija TsK KPSS* (1990), 6, pp. 190–191.

falsifying election results. After its defeat in 1924 and until the morrow of the "literary discussion", this opposition was merely a network of personal links, "managed" by Trotsky's secretariat. It was reconstituted as a tendency with some features of a faction only after the "Declaration of the 13" and the alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev in the United Opposition in the first half of 1926, and thereafter became a real faction. The "Trotskyists" soon proved to be more numerous than all the other groups. When they were expelled, at the XVth congress, it was the Trotskyists – henceforth called "the Left opposition" – who survived without surrendering, and gained at the expense of the other oppositional elements.

After the exiling of Trotsky, at the time of Stalin's turn towards forced collectivisation and out-and-out industrialisation, the Left opposition broke apart. Large-scale defections took place in 1928, around Karl Radek, Ivar Tenisovič Smilga and E.A. Preobrazhensky first, and then around I.N. Smirnov, V.A. Ter-Vaganian and S. V. Mrachkovsky. By 1930 the blocking of the left opposition was almost complete, and only a nucleus was left, about whom we are beginning to obtain some information.

In 1932 there seemed for a moment to be a rebirth of an opposition, with the crisis of Stalin's regime and the role played by those whom Sedov called "the ex-capitulator Trotskyists" - I.M. Smirnov, who brought over not only Mrachkovsky and Ter-Vaganian but also Smilga and Preobrazhensky.⁷ The "Smirnov group", alleged by Sedov to have "returned to the opposition",⁸ was swallowed up in the wave of repression.

At its beginning the international Left opposition was closely dependent on the Russian Left opposition, its envoys, its couriers, its political requirements and even its material means. It was Russians abroad who made the contacts, acted as arbiters, convened, suggested, advised – directed the movement, in fact, down to the end of 1927. From 1929 this role was taken over by Trotsky, aided by his son.

a) The Personnel: the Soviet Citizens

Leon Trotsky is well-known. Less well known, generally speaking, are the activists who were called, in the USSR, the "oppositionists" (*opposicionery*), and even less well known are those who devoted themselves to work in the International.

At Trotsky's side, as his chief of staff at Alma Ata and then at Prinkipo and his representative in Europe, was his son Lev L'vovič Sedov, a voluntary exile at the age of 23. The generational difference is striking, as is that of the background. Though very Russian, Sedov was also extremely European: he addressed his comrades in the familiar style, which his father never did.

The most important and most imposing of the other oppositionists abroad was "Rako", Khristian Rakovsky, Trotsky's friend (they addressed each other in the familiar style), one-time activist in seven European parties, former political functionary in the Red Army, former

⁷ Pierre Broué: Trotsky et le bloc des oppositions de 1932. In: *CLT* (1980), 4, pp. 5–37. Information on the Smirnov group from the Sedov papers, Stanford.

⁸ Léon Sedov: "La situation des B.L. en 1934". Archives of the International Secretariat. In: *CLT* (1985), 24, pp. 116–120.

head of the government of the Ukraine, diplomatic representative in London and then Paris, where he maintained friendly relations with a number of Communist activists. Others who were exiled along with him played a part, which was not negligible, in the birth of the French opposition: let us mention O.K. Aussem, Alexander Shliapnikov, Budu Mdivani, Preobrazhensky, Juri Piatakov.

However, there were exiles everywhere. Thus, in Vienna N.I. Ufimtsev and his companion Aleksandra Simachko ("Sasha") brought together the first oppositionists in the Austrian CP.⁹ Jacob Frank, of the trade delegation, played an important part, Raissa Epstein, a schoolfellow of Trotsky's and wife of the psycho-analyst Alfred Adler, provided for a time a centre for communication with the USSR.

In the years of the United Opposition the Soviet embassy in Berlin was the private preserve of the Zinovievists, whom Ruth Fischer listed along with Shklovsky, who supervised them.¹⁰ The 1923 opposition enjoyed the goodwill of Ambassador N.N. Krestinsky at least until 1928. G.I. Safarov, of the Constantinople embassy, frequented Communist circles in Berlin. S.A. Bessonov, formerly of the Institute of Red Professors, carried on clandestine activity there for some years.¹¹

In Prague the Zinovievist S.I. Kanachikov was ambassador and influenced critically-minded Communists. His successor Aleksandr Jakovlevich Arosev married the sister of the oppositionist Harry Freund. Family relationships were dominant here.¹²

Two wanderers played an important role, namely, E.B. Solntsev and N.N. Perevertsev. They were young men, of the October generation. The former was one of the bright stars of the Institute of Red Professors, as historian and economist. He held various positions in Europe before being sent to the United States, to work in Amtorg. Against Trotsky's advice¹³ he chose to return to the USSR at the end of 1928, and thereafter passed from one prison to another. He died in January 1936, at Novosibirsk, on hunger-strike in protest against an "administrative" sentence.¹⁴ Perevertsev worked in Geneva in the international railways organisation. Known as "Pierre", he was in touch with the Germans of the group of Hugo Urbahns and with the French groups, which contended for his "enrolment". Arrested on his return to the USSR and exposed as the addressee of instructions from Trotsky, he, too, disappeared into prison.¹⁵

Stalin was not unaware of the role played by these exiles. But he infiltrated their circles, either by "turning" some or by sending in agents. To the first category belonged Salomon Kharin, called "Joseph", who was also from the Institute of Red Professors, a member of the trade

⁹ Hans Schafranek: *Das kurze Leben des Kurt Landau. Ein österreichischer Kommunist als Opfer der stalinistischen Geheimpolizei*, Wien, Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1988, p. 138.

¹⁰ Ruth Fischer: *Stalin and German Communism. A Study in the Origins of the State Party*. With a preface by Sidney B. Fay, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1948, p. 587; MS of Ruth Fischer's memoirs in the Houghton Library, Harvard.

¹¹ Testimony of Pierre Naville.

¹² *Memoirs of Ruth Fischer and testimony of Jiří Kopp*.

¹³ Letter from Trotsky, 1929, to Kharin. Stanford, Hoover Archives.

¹⁴ *Biulleten' Oppozitsii* (1936), 50 (May).

¹⁵ Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*. He is called Pierre in the Sedov papers.

delegation in Paris. He negotiated his capitulation, but was unable to pay the price for it. Called home, he disappeared.¹⁶ To the other category belonged M. Lepoladsky, an employee of the Soviet consulate in Berlin, who used the pseudonym "Melev". We are still not certain about Jakob Frank, who rejoined Stalin's camp after two years' activity as an oppositionist.¹⁷

Among other supporters who were Soviet citizens, we can name Pedro Manulis, in Argentina, who was active under the name "Dvorkin"; Kuroedov, in Norway, until his premature death; Tsurupa, son of the old Bolshevik of that name, who worked in the trade delegation in London;¹⁸ another diplomat *en poste* in London who signed letters as "Tensov";¹⁹ and the mysterious "Vetter", who worked as a translator under the name of Jacques Reynaud, was called "the Frenchman", and was named Iakov Kocherets.²⁰ All these men were swallowed up in the repression.

b) Pioneers of the Communist Parties

The nuclei of the opposition in the capitalist countries were also made up of Communist activists: former socialists or anarcho-syndicalists, they belonged to the generation that had pioneered the CPs and the Comintern.

Some of these had joined the opposition when they were still leaders of their parties. This was the case with the Belgians War van Overstraeten, general secretary of the Belgian CP, Adhémar Hennaut, its secretary for organisation, and Léon Lesoil, who was won for Communism in 1918 in Vladivostok, where he landed with an Allied contingent, and who became leader of the Knights of Labour among the coal-miners of Charleroi.²¹

This was also the case with the Americans: James P. Cannon, who came from the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), was joint leader of the Foster-Cannon tendency and a member of the national committee of International Labour Defense; Max Shachtman, former youth leader, and those men who, with a past record of activity sometimes in Europe, had led the Socialist Party in the days of its ascent – Arne Swabeck, Martin Abern and also Hugo Oehler, who clandestinely "organised" workers' struggles, moving from one region to another, an itinerant professional revolutionary worthy of a novel by Steinbeck. This was the case, too, with a very young Canadian who was linked with them: Maurice Spector, chairman at 21 of the Communist Party of Canada and elected to the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) at the Sixth Congress in 1928.²²

¹⁶ Pierre Broué: Un Capitular à Paris. L'affaire Kharine. In: *CLT* (1981), 7/8, pp. 29–36.

¹⁷ For the point about Frank, see Schafranek, *Das kurze Leben des Kurt Landau*, pp. 138–140.

¹⁸ Testimony of Harry Wicks.

¹⁹ "Tensov" file, Sedov papers, Hoover Archive, Stanford.

²⁰ "Vetter" file, *ibid.*; biographical indications in letter from Serge (V. Serge: *Les déportés d'Orenbourg* [1]. In: *CLT* [1981], 7/8, p. 227).

²¹ Nadya de Beule: *Le trotskisme belge. L'histoire d'un groupe de communistes oppositionnels 1925–1940*, Bruxelles, Éd. de la Fondation Léon Lesoil, 1986.

²² William Rodney: *Soldiers of the International. A History of the Communist Party of Canada 1919–1929*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1968, p. 71.

Others were not party leaders when they joined the opposition, either because their party had been destroyed by repression or because they had already been expelled from it.

Former leaders of CPs were numerous in the opposition. The "three" Italians who joined in 1930 had led the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*; PCI) in the underground and then in exile. Pietro Tresso (Blasco), close to Amadeo Bordiga, had been secretary for organisation. Alfonso Leonetti (Feroci), a comrade of Gramsci, had been editor of *Ordine Nuovo* and director of the Italian Communist press at the start of the Fascist regime. Paolo Ravazzoli (Santini) was the Party's professional trade-union organiser. Along with them came the professional revolutionaries Mario Bavassano (Giacomo), who had been an officer in the Red Army, and Deborah Stretelsky (Barbara), a former functionary of the Communist Youth International (CYI).²³

With Chen Duxiu, the former general secretary, and Peng Shuzi, the former secretary for organisation of the Chinese CP, both of whom were made scapegoats for the failure of the Stalin-Bukharin policy during the second Chinese revolution, a whole generation of Chinese Communist cadres came over to the Left opposition at the beginning of the 1930s. They were reinforced by young Communists who joined the opposition in Moscow in 1927, along with another of the Chinese CP's founders, Liu Renjing. However, there was probably nowhere a man with such prestige as Chen Duxiu enjoyed in his own country as creator of the modern Chinese language and father of the national and democratic movement.²⁴

From the very heart of the Communist Party of Germany (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*; KPD) came Anton Grylewicz, a worker in the steel industry and member of the famous secret cell of "revolutionary shop-stewards" (*Revolutionäre Obleute*) who organised strikes in Berlin armaments factories in the midst of the war. Deputy to Emil Eichhorn at the Police Prefecture in 1918–19, this worker-cadre joined the KPD in 1920 with the working-class wing of the Independent Social-Democrats (*Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*; USPD). He was a member of the commission which, in 1923, prepared in detail in Moscow what was called the German October. Werner Scholem joined the USPD in 1917 and went to prison for organising an anti-war demonstration. Elected to the Reichstag, he went over to the KPD and, being apparently possessed of exceptional talent in this domain, he was for a year its secretary for organisation.

The Communist Party of Austria (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs*; KPÖ) gave to the opposition a man of still higher prestige, Josef Frey, a reserve captain in the army who became commander of the Red Guards and then chairman of the Soldiers' Council in Vienna, and founder and leader of the KPÖ in 1921. He entered into opposition against Zinoviev's faction. Along with him was a journalist (a former horsebreaker), the editor-in-chief of the party's organs, Kurt Landau.²⁵

²³ Silverio Corvisieri: *Trotsky e il comunismo italiano*, Roma, Samonà e Savelli, 1969.

²⁴ Lee Feigon: *Chen Duxiu. Founder of the Chinese Communist Party*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983; Wang Fan-hsi: *Chinese Revolutionary. Memoirs 1919–1949*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980; Durand, *Opposants à Staline*.

²⁵ Schafranek, *Das kurze Leben des Kurt Landau*.

In Spain it was the first generation of Communists who joined the opposition. Andrés (in Catalan, Andreu) Nín, former secretary of the National Confederation of Labour (*Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*; CNT), had been secretary of the International Red Aid (IRA)* and joined the Left opposition and its international commission in Moscow. Francisco García Lavid, known as Henri Lacroix, of the staff of the CI, engaged in editorial work on *Inprekorr*, was recruited by Nín in Moscow before he went off to gather support in Luxemburg and Belgium. Juan Andrade, leader of the Young Socialists and then of the first Spanish CP, the Spanish Workers Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Obrero Español*; PCOE), joined him when conditions made this possible. The former leader of the Young Communists Luis García Palacios caused a scandal in Moscow in 1927 when he applauded Trotsky at the Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI.²⁶

France was the specially favoured sphere of the oppositionists. Not only had Trotsky lived there for years, retaining solid connexions, personal and political, he had been given by the Comintern the task of watching over the first steps taken by the Communist movement in France. Two men came to the fore here, Alfred Rosmer and Albert Treint. Rosmer, a friend of Pierre Monatte and one of the inner circle of *La Vie ouvrière*, had been a member of the "small bureau" of the Comintern even before a Communist Party was born in France. For Trotsky he was a personal friend both very sure and very dear and, with his partner Marguerite, his "trusted representative". Rosmer's generation – Monatte, Boris Souvarine and many others - had been removed from leading positions in the French Communist Party (*Parti Communiste Français*; PCF) by the man known as "the Captain". This man, Treint, had joined the United Opposition in Zinoviev's wake but had not followed him into capitulation. The antagonism between Rosmer and Treint weighed heavily on the beginnings of the opposition in France.

The same problem existed in Czechoslovakia. The founder of the Slovak CP, a mass orator and a sufferer from tuberculosis, Hynek Lenorovič, embodied the revolutionary tradition of the CP of Czechoslovakia. He looked with disfavour on the Zinovievist faction whose embodiment was Alois Neurath, who had come over with the majority of the Sudetenland Social-Democrats and was also a former secretary of the Comintern.

To all these "historic" leaders of the Communist movement must be added, of course, younger men who were, politically, its pure products. The second generation was also made up of pioneers.

c) *The Pregnancy: the Nebula*

The Left opposition took a long time to get born, for reasons both political and material. Only bit by bit, through correspondence and meetings amid the circle around Trotsky, did it take shape as an international Communist tendency. The militarisation introduced by Zinoviev under the pseudonym of "bolshevisation", as well as surveillance by the GPU, made international contacts difficult.

* Andrés Nín was secretary not of the IRA, but of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU).

²⁶ Pelai Pagès: *El movimiento trotskista en España (1930–1935). La izquierda comunista de España y las disidencias comunistas durante la Segunda Republica*, Barcelona, Península, 1977; Léon Trotsky: *La Revolution espagnole 1930–1940*, ed. by Pierre Broué, Paris, Minit, 1975.

Should we regard as Left oppositionist the Poles around Wera Kostrzewa who protested in 1924 against the thrusting aside of Trotsky? No. Dismissed by Stalin in the Polish commission of the Fifth Comintern Congress, they then agreed to everything. Ten years had to pass before the international Left opposition made contact with Polish activists.

In France the conditions for building an opposition were at once favourable and terribly hard. Two trends appeared in the PCF in 1923. Expelled one after the other, Souvarine, Monatte and Rosmer formed an "old guard" who refused to defame Trotsky and thereby bury democracy in the party. The opposition was led by Maurice Paz. It included a certain number of revolutionary Paris workers, defended, also, internal democracy in the Russian CP and protested against the measures taken against Trotsky. But a certain opportunism, actual weakness in relation to colonial questions (the Rif war), kept the more militant elements away from it. The Zinovievists were represented by Treint.

In Germany the Lefts who were at the head of the Party in 1924 thanks to Zinoviev had been trained in enmity towards Trotsky, and the preparations for the "German October" had worsened their relations with him. Regarding this group as "Leftist", Trotsky had supported against it the leadership of the KPD around Heinrich Brandler, a working-class leader in whom he felt confidence. After October 1923, however, being terrorised by the leadership's offensive against Trotsky, Brandler and his group hastened to repudiate him and, when exiled in Moscow, turned towards support for the Soviet Right led by Bukharin and A.I. Rykov.²⁷ Only a few isolated individuals like Hans Weber, of the Wedding opposition in Berlin, the half-Russian Sasha Muller and the Palatinate activist Max Frenzel showed, in the KPD, some personal sympathy with Trotsky during the "literary discussion" around *Lessons of October*. The Zinovievist Left failed, moreover, to retain the leadership of the KPD which the Comintern had conferred on it in 1924, and was removed in 1925.²⁸

The Frey opposition developed within the KPÖ and sent Trotsky its political documents.²⁹

Circumstances brought party functionaries over to the positions of Trotsky and the Left opposition. Thus, the spectacle of Germany on the eve of revolution gave Trotsky two valuable supporters: Maurice Spector, who was arrested in Berlin while on his way to Moscow in the summer of 1923,³⁰ and the Bulgarian Dimitar Gatchev, who went there in the same year, in the military apparatus of which he was to become the head in his own country.³¹

Other Communist activists throughout the world sympathised with the Russian opposition. To be mentioned is the interest taken by the Dutch veteran Henk Sneevliet, the man who, having

²⁷ Pierre Broué: *Revolution en Allemagne 1917–1923*, Paris, Minuit, 1971.

²⁸ Id.: *Gauche allemande et opposition russe de 1926 à 1928*. In: *CLT* (1985), 22, pp. 4–25.

²⁹ Schafranek, *Das kurze Leben des Kurt Landau*, passim.

³⁰ Rodney, *Soldiers of the International*, pp. 71–72.

³¹ Testimony of Dimitar Gatchev and Archives of the international Secretariat of the Fourth International.

implanted socialism in the Dutch East Indies and represented the Comintern in China, had become the leader of an important trade union.³²

d) *The United Opposition in Europe*

We know that the unification, in the opposition inside the USSR, of its two main components, the "Trotskyist" one called "the opposition of 1923" and the "Leningrad" or "New" (Zinovievist) opposition, was far from easy. Among the "Trotskyists" there was reticence and even resistance, especially in Leningrad, where they had been the first to suffer from Zinoviev's fist. Protracted negotiations, many promises and, above all, determined goodwill on the part of the leaders of the two factions had been needed – for them this policy was dictated by their interests both immediate and long-term.

This was not the case outside of Soviet Russia. "Zinovievists" and "Trotskyists" had at their disposal not even the slightest part of the apparatus, nor did they enjoy even limited support among the Communist workers. They were little groups subject to their own laws, their own motivations and, in particular, their own grudges, in which their short history was rich. The "Zinovievists" had hounded, calumniated and expelled the "Trotskyists" during the years of Bolshevisation, and in the eyes of their victims they incarnated Evil and the bureaucratic regime which had murdered democracy in the party. For their part, the Zinovievists did not hesitate to defend their past policy and denounce the (often real) opportunism of their adversaries – their tendency to conciliation with the Social-Democrats, their concessions to the syndicalists, and so on.

France offers a caricatural example of this dispersed character of the oppositions. Monatte and Rosmer, followed by trade-union activists who had previously been grouped around *La Vie ouvrière* and were still firmly rooted in the trade-union movement, had founded the review *La Révolution prolétarienne*, which tended towards revolutionary syndicalism. It published documents from the political struggle in the USSR, and Trotsky considered it necessary, for reasons of tactics within the USSR, to disavow those responsible – for which he remained unforgiven by many.

Souvarine had disapproved of the "unnatural" alliance made by Trotsky with Zinoviev and other Bolshevists, and he never thereafter abandoned a certain sarcastic attitude towards Trotsky. He had revived the *Bulletin Communiste* for several years, collecting in it documents of the Russian opposition and publishing correspondence, in particular by Pierre Pascal, and also discussion articles. He conducted a Marx-Lenin Communist Club which drew in, though not for long, a number of Communist activists and Cadres such as the CGTU functionary Barozine (Pierre Gourget). He refused to have any contact with Treint and Kharin. "This enkharnated bloc seems to me to be valueless", he wrote.³³

Two of the young men who had spent some time with him after being active among the Surrealists, Pierre Naville and Gérard Rosenthal (Francis Gérard), revived in 1927 *La Lutte des Classes*, which also offered a platform to Trotsky and his comrades, notably Victor Serge.

³² Fritjof Tichelman: Henk Sneevliet, Montreuil-sous-Bois, PEC-La Brèche, 1988.

³³ *Bulletin Communiste* (1929), 32–33.

Treint had managed, along with a small Zinovievist faction, to remain in the CPF, from which he was not to be expelled until 1928. He brought back from Moscow documents he had obtained while in the USSR in order to publish them in France, such as the famous "Letter from Shanghai", a crushing exposure of the consequences of the Stalin-Bukharin policy. Associated with him on *L'Unité Léniniste* were the metal worker Henri Barré, the printer Gaston Faussecave and Suzanne Girault, a former schoolteacher in Russia whom many suspected of belonging to the "services".

It was in these years that there appeared among the little groups that were forming in the PCF the one led by the brothers Henri and Raymond Molinier and the chemical engineer Pierre Frank, men who, though unknown at that time, were to play an important role later.

Finally, whereas the Paz group seemed in 1925 to have everything in its favour for assembling and representing the opposition when, with Fernand Lorient, it brought forth the "Letter of the 250", it suffered from the conflict with Treint. Nevertheless, in 1927 it was Maurice Paz who moved, at the CP's Paris region conference, a resolution calling for publication in France of the theses of the Russian Left opposition. In November 1927, with, apparently, money from the oppositionists exiled in Paris,³⁴ he founded the periodical *Contre le Courant*, which became the letter-box of the United Opposition, taking the place of the *Bulletin Communiste*.

The United Opposition in Germany was purely Zinovievist, not only in its ideas but also in its methods. Did it not present the Russian United Opposition as the continuation of the new opposition in Leningrad, which Trotsky had allegedly joined, acknowledging his mistakes?³⁵ This opposition emerged from the junction between Urbahns, when he left prison, with Arkadi Maslov and Ruth Fischer, on their return from the USSR, and from long conversations in which they perfected their agreement with Zinoviev. When it learnt of these factional encounters the KPD's Central Committee made a pre-emptive strike, expelling Ruth Fischer and Maslov.

It was on the basis of protest against the stifling of democracy and repression of criticism that the first manifesto of the German United Opposition was composed: condemnation of the theory and perspective of building socialism in a single country, demand for information and publication of all the documents of the Russian opposition, condemnation of the bureaucratic methods that threatened to split the party, cancellation of all disciplinary sanctions. Signed by 700 well-known functionaries and activists, cadres of the KPD, this document was published on 11 September 1926. The affair had been managed from beginning to end, in the face of the apparatus, by Scholem.³⁶

Though a possible starting-point for organising a solid faction, this document nevertheless had the flaw of being exclusively devoted to Russian matters. Yet at this same time the defeat of the attempt by the Left opposition to "come out" at the beginning of October, the "peaceful declaration" of 16 October by which the leaders of the United Opposition, in order

³⁴ Testimony of Maurice Paz, naming Piatakov.

³⁵ "Manifeste des 700". See: Broué, *Gauche allemande et opposition russe*.

³⁶ Broué, *Gauche allemande et opposition russe*.

to prevent their expulsion or the break-up of their unity, acknowledged the error of all, including themselves, who had taken up a factional attitude, obviously struck a blow at the Germans' initiative. The large number of votes obtained by the opposition at party meetings could not prevent expulsions, which began with the signatories of the letter of the 700. More than 1,300 members were expelled altogether in 1927.

The German opposition struggled to break out of its isolation and that of the United Opposition. Grylewicz met Antonín Zápotocký and Viktor Stern, leaders of the Czechoslovak CP, in Prague, and made contact with the opposition around Neurath and the Young Communist leader Michalec (Karel Fischer). Ruth Fischer was received in Paris by two secretaries of the PCF, Paul Marion and Roland Dallet, and also met the Treint group. During his journey back to the USSR Rakovsky met Frenzel and Friedrich Baumgärtner, delegates of the Wedding opposition which had spread to the Palatinate and was a component of the United Opposition. Actually, despite Trotsky's reservations, the German opposition was following the path which was at that time favoured by Zinoviev's friends, the proclamation of a "public faction". When they put up "Left Communist" candidates in the September 1927 municipal elections at Altona, as a concrete expression of this line, they met with defeat. It seemed, though, that, under pressure from Safarov, the opposition in Germany was moving towards the creation of a "second party" when the break-up of the United Opposition at the end of 1927 changed the factors in the problem.

In Austria the United Opposition arose in the party under the leadership of Josef Frey and Karl Tomann: the latter broke away very soon. Frey and his companions – 200 of whom were expelled in January – founded the Opposition, which launched the journals *Arbeiterstimme* in Vienna and *Der Neue Mahnruf* in Graz. A few months later there was a split and the "war of the chiefs" between Frey and Landau.³⁷

The situation was better in Czechoslovakia. There the Slovak group led by Lenorovič held aloof from the United Opposition in the party led by Michalec and Neurath. The latter group was impressive in that it included a number of party cadres. But Lenorovič had recruited young activists who were to play a vital role in the 1930s: Wolfgang Salus, Jiří Kopp and, especially, Jan Frankel.

In Greece Pantelis Pouliopoulos, the Party's secretary, circulated the materials of the Russian opposition and called for their publication. He was expelled in 1929 and founded an oppositional group which began publishing *Spartakos*.

Other links were formed in this period when activists spent time in Moscow. For example, the Czech V. Burian was won for the Left opposition in Moscow, where he was working for the International Red Aid (IRA). Wang Fanxi was recruited in the dormitory of the Chinese students at the Sun Yatsen University.³⁸ Sandalio Junco, a Cuban Communist baker, was convinced by Nín, whom he met in the RILU. Contact between the Peruvian José Carlos

³⁷ Schafranek, *Das kurze Leben des Kurt Landau*, passim.

³⁸ Wang Fan-hsi, *Chinese Revolutionary*.

Mariátegui and Pierre Naville came to nothing, but the opposition in Brazil originated from the relations Naville established with the art critic Mário Pedrosa.³⁹

Some important persons in the Comintern's apparatus also secretly joined the Left opposition. Victor Serge mentions in his memoirs the Bulgarian Stojan Minev, known as Lorenzo Vanini, Chavaroche and Stepanov, and we know that one of the most active was Haifisz, better known under the names of Guralsky, August Kleine or Lepetit. It was probably at this time that a functionary of the CYI named A. Golod (nationality not known) joined the Left opposition in Mexico.

e) *The Explosion*

The break-up of the opposition in the USSR into "Trotskyists" and "Zinovievists" sounded the knell of the United Opposition everywhere. Thereafter only oppositions linked with the "Trotskyists" in the USSR would come into being.⁴⁰

The Zinovievists had imparted to the conference held in Berlin in November 1927 a line favorable to the constitution of a second party. It was on precisely the opposite basis that they decided to carry through to the point of denunciation their break with Trotsky after the publication of two letters from him to Perevertsev giving directives for the organisation of the opposition.

Whereas, straight away, the Trotskyists were unanimous in resolving to stand firm and confront the repression which threatened and then burst upon them, the ranks of the Zinovievists were very soon shaken in different directions. Eventually a large section of them, inspired by Safarov and O.S. Tarkhanov and including the cadres of the Leningrad Young Communists, refused to follow Kamenev and Zinoviev in their capitulation at the beginning of 1928.

The German oppositionists, following the earlier line of the Zinovievists, began to form, at the beginning of January 1928 – going against the view of Trotsky and his representatives in Germany – the "Lenin League" (*Leninbund*), a veritable "public faction" comprising several thousands of members, many workers and young people among them. However, the capitulation of Zinoviev and Kamenev and the Comintern's promise to take back those of its members who would repudiate the *Leninbund* in good time caused Ruth Fischer and Maslow to abandon it. Led thereafter by Urbahns, the *Leninbund* followed a hazy line, hesitating between "opposition" and "new party", and this caused the departure of supporters of a real "opposition" in the KPD like Scholem. Supporters of Trotsky in it could be counted on the fingers of one hand, even though Solntsev had entertained the hope of winning over Urbahns.⁴¹

In France the men of the "inner circle" of *La Revolution prolétarienne* turned their backs on the Communist movement and founded the Syndicalist League. The Treint group split, with

³⁹ Centre Mário Pedrosa (CEMAP), São Paulo.

⁴⁰ Durand, *Opposants à Staline*.

⁴¹ Rüdiger Zimmermann: *Der Leninbund. Linke Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik*, Düsseldorf, Droste, 1978.

the former general secretary abandoning Zinoviev to found *Le Redressement communiste*, while Suzanne Girault went back into the CPF. Polemic continued to rage, but it is hard to discern what the political differences were. Treint said that he was supported by "Pierre" (Perevertsev), while Paz claimed the backing of "Joseph" (Kharin)! *Contre le Courant* alleged that it was the unifying centre of the Opposition in France, which evoked protests from the others, angered by this "pretension".

Van Overstraeten and the majority of the Central Committee of the Belgian CP carried out a test of strength in connection with the oppositionists who had been deported to the remote parts of the USSR. When they were expelled they began publishing a periodical, *Le Communiste*. Francisco García Lavid took over leadership of the Spanish language groups in the CPs of Belgium and Luxemburg and linked them with the Russian Left opposition.

A different possibility emerged in the Netherlands. There a break took place in June 1927 between the IRA and the National Labour Secretariat (*Nationaal Arbeidssecretariaat*; NAS) led by Henk Sneevliet. The NAS published in *Klassenstrijd* (Class Struggle) the documents of the Left opposition and articles by Henriette Roland Holst, a respected activist who sympathised with the Russian opposition.

The *Leninbund* took the initiative. Despite reservations voiced by Solntsev, it prepared an international conference at Aachen. Alongside the *Leninbund*, which was represented by Urbahns, the conference was attended by Sneevliet's group, by *Contre le Courant* and by German syndicalists. Treint was not represented, alleging lack of money. There was nobody from the USSR. In spite of its ambitions the international conference had only a meagre outcome: a fund set up to help Trotsky and the Soviet transportees. This "failure", which marked the end of the first phase of the Left opposition, lost importance, however, in the context of Trotsky's expulsion from the USSR and his intervention, direct from now on, in the work of building the international opposition.

E.B. Solntsev drew the conclusion of this period, in which he played a foremost role, when he wrote to Trotsky on 8 November 1928: "We are undoubtedly witnessing the beginning (the very beginning) of the formation of a left wing in the Comintern. In the light of the events which have taken place up to now we can state definitely that this process will be long, hard and very painful. It will be accompanied by harsh battles, disputes and even splits."

f) *The New Axis*

The crisis undergone by the Russian opposition in 1929 eventually proved to be a factor of acceleration. The defection of most of the Old Bolsheviks helped to increase the weight of Trotsky and the "exterior" as compared with that of those "in the country", and all the more so because the leaders who had not capitulated – Rakovsky, L.S. Sosnovsky, Solntsev – were confined in rigorous isolation.⁴²

On Prinkipo Trotsky received many visitors. At the beginning there were the French: the Rosmers, Henri and Raymond Molinier and the latter's wife, Jeanne Martin des Pallières, Pierre Frank and Gourget, together with Lucien Marzet, Dr. Louis Bercher and Robert Ranc,

⁴² Pierre Broué: Les trotskystes en Union soviétique.

three persons from Rosmer's circle, Pierre and Denise Naville, Gérard Rosenthal and Maurice Paz. Marzet, Ranc and Frank stayed as secretaries until the arrival in 1923* of young Jean van Heijenoort, who had never belonged to the CP. Young Salus, who came to offer his services, brought along Jiří Kopp and František Kohout. Raisa Adler sent Jan Frankel at the beginning of 1930: he stayed for three years. It was she, too, who sent Jakob Frank, who acted as secretary for several months.

Americans came to Constantinople: Max Shachtman, Arne Swabeck, Albert Glotzer. The Chinese Liu Renjing, who came from Moscow on his way back to China, stayed. From the German section, apart from the two brothers Sobolevicius, concealed agents of the GPU, known as Roman Well and Adolf Senin, there came only persons with no responsibilities – the young historian Heinz Schürer, the Hamburg student Rudolf Klement and the Saxon worker Otto Schuessler, the last two as secretaries. This was one of Trotsky's great disappointments. Neither Urbahns nor any leader of the *Leninbund*, nor Sneevliet, nor Josef Frey, all of whom had been urgently invited, took the trouble to come – any more than did, later, the Spanish leaders.

The "axis" chosen by Trotsky was Alfred Rosmer, with a re-grouping on a clear foundation. Rosmer was a personal friend, a man deserving of full confidence by virtue of his loyalty and moral rigour. He was also a veteran of struggles "against the stream", the indomitable opponent of the *union sacrée*, one of the pillars of the internationalist nucleus in 1914, and one of the first Frenchmen to come to Moscow to put himself at the service of the Revolution – in short, a man with a "life-story of trail-blazing". He was no acrobat or mass orator, no theoretician and not, either, a "machine politician". Expelled from the CPF in the days when Zinovievism prevailed, he was not one of the inner circle and knew little of the disputes within the apparatus, but he was very well informed about the labour movement in France and internationally. What was awkward was that those who considered themselves true "Communists" because they had won their stripes in the party that was born at Tours and then "bolshevised" looked condescendingly on this "fellow-traveller" who was "very syndicalist", not very noisy, and disdainful of the boxing and intrigue that went on between petty chiefs. The principal leaders of the other groups were ready to accept him among themselves as a lieutenant, but none could agree that he should be the commander-in-chief, and each showed this in his own way.

Trotsky, for his part, began by defining the criteria which should demarcate the Left opposition: attitudes to the Anglo-Russian trade-union committee, to the Chinese revolution, and to economic policy in the USSR. It was a question of breaking with political opportunism and treating the "Russian question" and that of "socialism in one country" as a class problem, the refraction in the USSR of the world-wide class struggle. His clear-cut position, which was often labelled "ultimatumist" by functionaries to whom it was inconvenient, was actually to be revealed as less decisive than the debate which broke out concerning the fate of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Trotsky analysed this conflict in terms of the international class struggle and sided with the Soviet state and the Chinese revolution against the nationalist counter-revolution of Chiang Kai-shek.

* The correct year is 1932.

Among his opponents on this issue were Robert Louzon and *La Révolution prolétarienne*, Paz and *Contre le Courant*, Urbahns and *Die Fahne des Kommunismus*. Political resentments were added to personal ones, to bitterness at not having been chosen to serve as the "axis" or fear of now being reduced to playing secondary roles. In the end it were minorities in the various trends that got together. Rosmer took with him some personalities from the "inner circle", such as Charbit and Marthe Bigot, but neither Monatte nor Louzon, who continued to bring out *La Révolution prolétarienne*. From the Souvarine trend came Naville and Rosenthal, who had already long been independent, together with Gourget. From *Le Redressement communiste* came Jean-Jacques Chernobelsky. They were joined by the members of the group led by Raymond Molinier, whom Trotsky thought well of on account of his enterprising spirit, initiative and efficiency. So began *La Vérité*.

A tour of Central Europe made by Rosmer revealed the difficulties that were to arise with Frey, a furious factionist, and with Urbahns and his circle, who could not tolerate the idea of international supervision of their activity and who had used for their own organisation's benefit the funds collected for the Russian transportees. It was going to be possible, though, to organise, with Grylewicz and others a "*Leninbund* minority", although Landau, who had come to Germany from Austria, where his relations with Frey were poisoned, established himself in the Wedding opposition. However, the reasonable hopes that existed for developing a genuine Left opposition in Germany shrank visibly with the debates on the Russian opposition, the obvious temptation to create a "new party" which tormented Urbahns, and his irritation at the factional work of the "Trotskyists" in his organisation, which led him to expel them at the moment when he began to affirm that capitalism had been restored in the USSR.

The situation in Czechoslovakia, though different, was no better. There were plenty of able men there, but rivalries festered and machine-politics flourished. A sizeable section of the opposition moved in 1929 from Zinoviev's positions to those of Brandler, on the grounds of struggle for democracy in the party. Trotsky himself supported the group formed by Salus which gave backing to Lenorović, with whom he corresponded at length and seriously. In this way the Jískra group came into being, alongside local groups implanted in the Czechoslovak CP – Otto Friedmann in Prague, Burian in Brno, Juskievic in Plzen.

Links by correspondence were established in Sofia with the Bulgarian activists Stefan Manov and Sider Todorov, veterans from the Rakovsky period: the second-named was the father of a member of the Russian opposition, Vassil Sidorov. In Yugoslavia a small group began work under the leadership of Mikola Popović, one of the leaders of the Young Communists who had been in contact since 1923.

On the other side of the world there appeared in December 1929 an appeal signed by Chen Duxiu, Peng Shuzi and more than 80 leaders and cadres of the Chinese CP who had been expelled after the 1927 defeat. Much resistance was shown by the other groups, who regarded Chen as an "opportunist", Liu Renjing taking the lead on this theme. Trotsky considered that the fact that Chen had acknowledged his mistakes was enough for confidence to be accorded to him. The Chinese opposition progressed towards unification, which was accomplished in April 1931. Meanwhile the apparatus of the Comintern had betrayed to the police a group of new oppositionist cadres around He Mengxiong, who were executed.

The PCI was practically annihilated inside the country itself. In France it had lost the "Italian language groups" to the Bordiga tendency led by Enrico Russo, who had been expelled from the PCF. Together with the "three" (Pietro Tresso, Alfonso Leonetti, Ravazzoli), this was all that was left of the *Ordine Nuovo* leadership, the successors of Gramsci who had opposed the sectarian and adventurist policy of the "third period" in the history of the Comintern.

Relations with Sneevliet were damaged during the discussion about the Chinese Eastern Railway. By founding a new party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (*Revolutionaire Socialistische Partij*; RSP), and thereby renouncing the struggle to rectify the Dutch CP he had tacitly turned his back on the opposition.

Most of the members of the Belgian CP had been expelled and the opposition driven out. In contrast to a number of other national groups the opposition here was markedly working-class in character, though it lacked much of a base in Brussels.

The Spanish opposition around García Lavid had left Belgium for Spain. Reinforced for several months by Julian Gorkín, a former functionary of the Comintern, and rooted in the *Agrupación* of Madrid, it had absorbed an oppositionist group in the Asturias, "the Bolsheviks of Nalón", led by José Loredo Aparicio, and drew in numerous activists and cadres, including Juan Andrade. Trotsky placed much reliance on Andres Nín, a former oppositionist in the USSR who had been expelled in 1930 and returned to Spain, where he was very well known in the party and in working-class circles under its influence.

James P. Cannon and Maurice Spector had come upon Trotsky's *Criticism of the Draft Programme of the Comintern* when they were in Moscow for the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, and had been convinced by it. They managed to bring it out of Russia and met first Urbahns, then Solntsev and Max Eastman, who was to help them financially. Thus began, in 1928, the opposition in the CP of the United States (CPUSA), with Shachtman, Cannon, Abern, Swabeck, Oehler and dozens of other pioneers. When they were expelled they began publishing *The Militant* and then established officially the Communist League of America.

From North America the opposition spread to Latin America. In Mexico the American Russell Blackwell, known as Rosalio Negrete, who was connected with Golod, made contact with a group of Mexicans led by the Cuban Julio Antonia Mella (who was murdered soon afterward) and which included the future writer José Revueltas. The opposition developed in Brazil under the impetus of Pedrosa and Rodolfo Coutinho, who had made contact with the Russian opposition. The activists of the first wave in Argentina were brought together by *The Militant*, and a second wave arrived with students returning from Spain.*

In Greece Raymond Molinier had contacted the Archaeo-Marxist organisation, two of whose leaders, the journalist Mitsos Yotopoulos and the actor Vitsoris, Trotsky met. This organisation, which dated from 1923, was *de facto* a "new party". When it declared for the

* On Trotskyism in Argentina, see the following publication contemporary to Broué: Osvaldo Coggiola: *El trotskismo en la Argentina (1929-1960)*, Buenos Aires, CEAL, 1985.

opposition, this evoked sarcastic comment from the Pouliopoulos group, which stood for rectification of the Greek CP, but it embraced and organised hundreds of workers.

It was also under the influence of the Americans that the first oppositionists came together in London, around the Englishman F.A. Ridley and the Indian Chandu Ram (Agarwala), with several brilliant students from Ceylon, including Colvin da Silva and Leslie Goonewardene. This was true also of the second wave of the British oppositionists – Harry Wicks, Hugo Dewar, Reg Groves – who formed what became known as "the Balham Group". A nucleus originated by Frank Glass, from Britain, was established in South Africa.

Paris also spread its influence abroad. The oppositionists round *La Vérité* made contact with the Hungarian Communists in Paris led by Karolý Szilvassý and, through Lenorović and the Bratislava Hungarian Terebassy, got in touch with the clandestine opposition in the Young Communists led in Budapest by Peter Hartstein. In the same period the French activists contacted the young émigré leaders of the Independence Party of Annam, which was close to the CP, and won over two of them, Ta Thu Thau and Huynkh Van Phong. The Paris "Jewish Group" joined the opposition, and one of its youngest members, Pavel Okun, known as Mill, acted as administrative secretary: he was to try to sell himself to Stalin.

g) Reconstruction

One of the first tasks to be undertaken, in Trotsky's view, was building an international leadership for the opposition, and he devoted himself to this task from the moment of his arrival abroad. The first "international bureau", made up of Rosmer, Nín and Landau, looked well on paper but never actually met. Soon the actual work passed into the hands of a secretariat, the membership of which changed, however. We can mention Pierre Frank, the Greek Rosencweig (Myrtos), Leonetti, Roman Well and Senin, Eugen Bauer, the Greek Yotopoulos (Vitte) and the Soviet citizen Mill. Much of the work was also performed, though, by Lev Sedov and Trotsky's close collaborators, such as Jan Frankel. Trotsky paid much attention to this work, strove to strengthen it, and was rarely satisfied with it. One of the achievements he was proud of in the succeeding period was that he personally persuaded Ruth Fischer to join.

The Left opposition stood for rectifying the Comintern and therefore opposed any move to create a "second party", and this question caused the break with Sneevliet and Urbahns, as well as underlying the political difficulties experienced with the Spanish section, now called *Izquierda Comunista*, which was convinced of a Spanish "exceptionalism" that, in its view, ruled out any prospect of development in the Spanish CP.

From their comrades of the Russian opposition the French oppositionists took over and retained with pride the exotic title of "Bolshevik-Leninists", which summed up their aim, a "return to Lenin" and emphasised the point that it was on the basis of the Russian revolution that they had broken away and taken shape. On the programmatic and theoretical plane the heritage of the International did not wholly derive from Lenin and not everything in it must be sought there. The Left opposition saw as politically mistaken the decisions of the Fifth and Sixth Congresses of the Comintern and it intended to recast the Programme, drafted by Bukharin, which the Sixth Congress had accepted. Its programmatic foundation was thus that of the first four congresses of the Communist International.

In the name of the need for independence of the workers' party the opposition condemned as opportunist the policy followed in China with the Guomindang, the Anglo-Russian trade-union committee and the "workers' and peasants' parties".

In the name of the international character of the proletarian revolution, the opposition rejected the theory of "building socialism in one country" and its corollaries like "National Bolshevism" in Germany. The USSR it saw, despite its degeneration, as a workers' state which must be defended against imperialism.

The opposition condemned Stalin's economic policy as a whole, in both its variants and in all their intermediate forms – both the economic opportunism of the years 1923–1928 (not, as is too often said, of the New Economic Policy, 1921–1928) and the economic adventurism of out-and-out industrialisation and forced collectivisation from 1928 onward.

Like Lenin, the opposition declared for active work in mass organisations, in the first place the reformist trade unions, and denounced the "Red trade unions". It rejected the formula of "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants" which the Comintern put forward instead of "dictatorship of the proletariat". It advocated the use of transitional slogans, with a view to clarifying the consciousness of the masses through their experience, and, in particular of democratic slogans. Taking up again Lenin's formulations in favour of the workers' united front, the opposition condemned the interpretation thereof as "united front from below" and the Stalinist pseudo-theory of the transformation of Social-Democracy into "Social-Fascism". Finally, it called for restoration of democracy in the party as in Lenin's time, in rules and in practices.

A select force with tempered cadres and a prestigious leader, the international Left opposition thought that history reserved for it in the coming revolution, at the head of a regenerated International, the role that the Bolshevik Party had played in 1917...

h) A Severe Repression

Part of this edifice collapsed under the blows of repression from the beginning of the 1930s. Everywhere the organisation came under attack. The Soviet activists were cut off from the rest of the world. They were also deeply penetrated by provocateurs. Nevertheless, the situation in the USSR favoured them, as can be observed through the political evolution of I.N. Smirnov's group. He it was who, having established relations with Trotsky *via* Sedov, took the initiative of forming, in 1932, a bloc of oppositions, with the Zinoviev and Lominadze groups and the former leadership of the Komsomol.⁴³ However, the repression unleashed by Stalin in connexion with the Riutin affair brought this effort to naught.

A similar development took place in China. Three weeks after the unity conference and the establishment of the Communist League of China, the bulk of the oppositionist organisation, of which Chiang's police had knowledge, fell into their hands. Few of those arrested left

⁴³ Broué, Trotsky et le bloc; Id.: Party Opposition to Stalin (1930–1932) and the First Moscow Trial. In: John W. Strong (ed.): *Essays on Revolutionary Culture and Stalinism. Selected Papers from the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*, Columbus OH, Slavica, 1990, pp. 98–111.

Chiang's prisons alive. Chen Duxiu escaped this first wave of arrests and also the second, which came a few months later, but in the end, in 1932, he was taken, and thereafter all that survived was a little group of oppositionists existing in precarious clandestinity thanks to Frank Glass and to the American journalist Harold R. Isaacs, who hid Liu Renjing.⁴⁴

The Indochinese oppositionists in France, arrested after a demonstration outside the Elysée in support of the mutineers of Yen-Bay in their home country, were expelled from France. Months had to pass before they were able to reorganise themselves in Indochina.

The Bulgarian oppositionists were arrested, and Gatchev began a prison term which lasted until the war. Clandestine like the party in which they were the opposition, the Yugoslav oppositionists did not escape the harsh repression directed against the Communist party.

These were serious losses. But they are not the only items on the debit side of the internal opposition's balance-sheet, for internal political crises did comparable damage.

i) Permanent Crises

Certain episodes remind one of the Day of Dupes. For example, the adhesion to the international opposition of the "three" members of the leadership of the PCI worsened relations with the Bordiga group, clenched in sectarian reclusion and faith in their leader, silent in Italy. The New Italian Opposition (NOI) was cut off from the base of the Communist émigrés, all of whom were very close to Bordiga's followers, and had the greatest difficulty in publishing a bulletin.

The choice of Rosmer as the "axis" for grouping the French opposition around *La Vérité* antagonised Paz. Souvarine broke with Trotsky, condemning his "precipitancy". Monatte "crossed the Rubicon" by supporting trade-union reunification with a section of the CGT bureaucracy. Soon, though, it was Rosmer himself who took off, blaming Trotsky for not supporting him against Raymond Molinier, whom he saw as an "adventurer" and possibly an "agent". Relations with Naville were very bad. The organisation was unable to keep Treint for more than a few months and petty splits grew frequent. The French section of the opposition was breaking up, and no longer commanded the authority which the moral rigour of someone like Rosmer had conferred on it.

A disaster of the same sort was experienced by the opposition in Germany, though that country held, as Trotsky wrote, "the key to the world situation." The United Left Opposition (Vereinigte Linke Opposition, VLO), born of the merger between the minority in the *Leninbund*, the small Bolshevik Unity group and what was left of the Wedding opposition, lasted for less than a year. Kurt Landau, who became its principal leader, showed himself to be a furious factionist, and the Stalinist agents inside the opposition, such as Roman Well and Jakob Frank, poured oil on the flames. It was Landau who, by his expulsions, took the initiative in bringing about the split that Well prayed for, to Trotsky's great indignation. The

⁴⁴ Pierre Broué: Chen Duxiu et la IV^e Internationale de 1937 à 1942. In: *CLT* (1983), 15, pp. 27–39; Damien Durand: La Naissance de l'Opposition de gauche chinoise. In: *CLT* (1983), 15, pp. 15–26.

German opposition was not, alas, strong enough to wage a victorious fight against the Stalinist line which opened the road to power for Hitler.⁴⁵

In Czechoslovakia, when Neurath in 1932 recognised his mistake and broke with Brandler to draw close to the Left opposition, he was very badly received by the youngsters, and no good came of the years when thousands of German-speaking workers in Czechoslovakia who had followed him either went over to the Social-Democrats or gave up all activity.

k) The Dead-End

Down to the last moment Trotsky thought he would be able to revive in the Comintern and in some at least of its sections a few sparks of willingness to combat Nazism, and did not despair of a reawakening of the KPD, bound tight as it was by its bureaucracy and a policy of division covered by a vocabulary that was at once sectarian and opportunist, symbolised by the formula which turned Social-Democracy into "Social Fascism".

Will-power was not lacking among the German oppositionists, who went from meeting to meeting, calling on the workers to impose the united front on their leaders. They obtained a few successes, as at Oranienburg, where Helmut Schneeweiss organised united workers' militias that were to keep the Nazis out of the working-class districts for weeks after they had come to power.

Veterans like Oskar Seipold and Grylewicz toiled unsparingly. High quality was shown by young men like Erwin H. Ackerknecht, known as Bauer, a young doctor who led the organisation from the end of 1932; Oskar Hippe, one of the best organisers;⁴⁶ Heinz Epe, known as Walter Held, who came from the Ruhr; and Paul Wassermann, who led the work in the Left-wing Socialist Workers' Party (*Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei: SAP*). At the end of 1932 the German Left opposition received the help of Scholem and won over an old activist who had organised a clandestine opposition in the party in Berlin, Karl Ludwig, former editor of the *Volkswille*.⁴⁷ At the same moment, however, Well and Senin tried to organise a split and bring the oppositions into Stalin's camp – an operation which failed to come off but which was to weigh heavy in terms of discredit and discouragement.

In reality, the opposition lacked the capacity to organise the Communist activists whom it influenced, or the strength to effect a junction with those who turned at the last moment against the KPD's suicidal policy, so that such hardened Stalinists as Heinz Neumann and Hermann Remmele clashed with the party apparatus.

The picture was the same in Czechoslovakia. The influence of Trotsky and his writings on Germany and the tragic confirmation given them by events and Hitler's successes affected the very top ranks of the Czechoslovak CP, reaching not only Jan Šverma, who was a member of the opposition at the end of the 1920s, but the party's leader himself, Klement

⁴⁵ Schafranek, *Das kurze Leben des Kurt Landau*.

⁴⁶ Oskar Hippe: *...und unsere Fahn' ist rot. Erinnerungen an sechzig Jahre in der Arbeiterbewegung*, Hamburg, Junius, 1979.

⁴⁷ Sedov papers, Stanford.

Gottwald, and the party's theoretician at that time, Josef Guttman, who was expelled as a "Trotskyist" and actually became one at the end of the 1930s.

The German opposition was, in fact, unable to reverse the KPD's line of capitulation to the Comintern apparatus, which opened the door to Hitler for a victory won without a fight. Even if we think that the German working class, divided, misled, bewildered, had no time to organise a struggle to survive, it remains true that the opposition was not able to "save" the KPD. And this is what constituted the decisive factor in the turn that Trotsky made in 1933.

When Trotsky proclaimed the "bankruptcy" of the KPD and then that of the Comintern and the other CPs, and took up a position in favour of new Communist parties and a Fourth International, he acknowledged the failure of his policy of "rectification". The opposition had failed to check the degeneration of the organisations which had been founded for and by the revolution.

A certain number of oppositionists clung to a policy and analyses that were clearly outdated. This was the case with the Archaeo-Marxists and with Spaniards such as Arlen, Vela and García Lavid, whom we know from recent discoveries to have entered the service of the Spanish Stalinists. It happened, too, with the Paris "Jewish group", the Italian Mario Bavassano, who supported it in 1933, and the "Balham group", who refused to enter the Independent Labour Party (ILP).

The fresh enthusiasm that Trotsky now showed corresponded to what he saw as a "new stage". The stage of "opposition" was definitely over. For him the Comintern and its parties were dead as revolutionary organisations.

1) Balance Sheet and Explanation

It remains to try and provide an explanation which is not a mere *post-mortem* or worship of the accomplished fact.

In the first place, it is not possible to draw up a balance sheet of an opposition in the CPs and the Comintern without taking account of the specific conditions of these bodies. It was no accident that Trotsky accorded such importance to the "old-timers", to Chen Duxiu, Rosmer, Grylewicz, Sneevliet. Not only had these men been pioneers of the Communist movement, their past was rooted in socialist, syndicalist and even national-democratic movements.

In the epoch of the opposition's struggle the CPs had achieved as yet only a superficial implantation: they hardly formed part of the traditions of their respective working classes, to which in contrast to the case with Bolshevism in Russia, they more often than not ran counter. And it was in this setting, which was artificial in that it was determined by relations with an external element, "Moscow", that the opposition tried to insert itself or to develop its influence.

In the period beginning in 1928, when the opposition was building its organisational cadre, the CPs pursued, at the instigation of the Stalinised Comintern, a leftist policy which alienated them from the broad mass of the workers, so that the KPD came to be a party made up of passers-by and of unemployed. What was more serious, the economic and social crisis put

the party apparatus – its functioning, but also the salaries of its officials – in a situation of tight dependence on financial "aid" from Moscow.

The oppositionist thus had to confront several repressions: as a Communist, that of the state and its police; as a trade-union activist, that of the Social-Democratic apparatus in the major groupings and that of the Stalinist apparatus in the "Red trade Unions"; and that of the employers, who put him on their "black lists".

Even though the situation was less grave than in Germany, the same features were to be found in France and in the United States. It was no accident that many activists were recruited among the immigrant workers, who were traditionally victims of super-exploitation but were also outside "the big battalions of the class." The members of the "Jewish group", influential in the opposition in Paris, were craftsmen who had been forced by poverty to leave their home countries and who were not subject to the pressure of the traditions, national and working-class, of the country where they had found refuge. The Jewish Communist activists of New York who published *Klorkheit* were at first in the same situation, but proved able to integrate themselves better into the work of the opposition, soon ceasing to operate as a "language group". The "Trotskyist" who was denounced in the USSR as a cosmopolitan and a Jew really was a cosmopolitan and often a Jew in the rest of Europe and the world, and that did not make life easier for him.

Everywhere the opposition bore the features of a sect. The corresponding ways and state of mind sometimes came from the CP itself. Thus, the KPÖ, favourite homeland of "factionism", bequeathed this tiresome characteristic to its opposition, for which Jan Frankel invented the disparaging term "Austro-oppositionism."

For most of the time, however, it was the conditions of existence and activity of these groups which determined their state of mind and their practices. Little groups gathered around a "chief" whom they regarded as being infallible – and who was only rarely Trotsky, he being rather in the position of God, but "so poorly informed"! – they were not so much factions or tendencies as cliques or clans.

The history of the national groups is that of a succession of crises and splits, sometimes of unifications, and rarely of reunifications. Splitting became a feature of everyday life. There was, indeed, no fear of material damage occurring, since the situation thus created, though certainly not any better, could not be any worse. Thus we see continuing to exist groups made up of a dozen members, drawing up "theses" and "platforms" and expecting the masses to be so good as to "recognise" them on the basis of their theorising: an attitude described by Trotsky as "propagandism".

On such foundations it was obviously not easy to maintain an effective barrier against "penetration" and, in particular, against the placing by Stalin of his agents, whether as *agents provocateurs* or not. There are plenty of examples of this, even if we are still far from knowing everything in this sphere. When the first split took place in Austria the "efforts" of Jakob Frank to bring about reunification resulted in the creation of a third organisation which he led for a few months before publicly requesting readmission to the CP. The two Soviet agents who were specially trained for this purpose, Abraham Sobolevicius, known as Adolf Senin, and his brother Ruvin, known as Roman Well, Schmidt or Sobolev, played an important role. Both

were members of the International Secretariat and, with Mill, constituted the majority in it. Activists who enjoyed Trotsky's confidence opened doors for them: thus, Raymond Molinier, in the fury of his fight against Rosmer, organised a "faction" with Mill, Well and Senin. Lev Sedov, who knew what was going on, did not inform Trotsky, because he shared the aim of the "faction", which was to get rid of Rosmer, whom he saw as protecting Pierre Naville and the "navillism" which he loathed.

The feature common to the policy of the "agents" was their desire to intensify internal disputes, to carry on as little political activity as possible, to pour oil on the flames of personal relations and to make their own contribution to an atmosphere poisoned with calumny and rumour, of which, though they had no monopoly, they were often the source. Thus, Pierre Frank presented to Trotsky as having been proved a diversion of correspondence with the Russians with which he charged Landau. Thus, Senin and the Soviet citizen Lepoladsky-Melev combined to assert to Trotsky that Landau was threatening to cause a scandal with letters from the USSR which he had managed to get hold of. There was no truth in all this, but Trotsky very soon became worried because Well had concluded so quickly in favour of expelling Landau, which meant, of course, a split, and so it was vital to transfer from Well to him the accusation of "splittism".

How can we be surprised, given these circumstances, at the rapid wearing-out and discouragement of the "old men". For many of these their entry into Communism, their joining a CP, had been a decision as important as their first step in the labour and revolutionary movements. And that had happened only ten years earlier. The correspondence of Rosmer exhibits this fatigue, this rejection of the methods and even the manners of younger activists who did not respect him and of whom he had no high opinion. How, after seeing his life's work twice destroyed, could he face a third such process unrolling before his eyes, with its ritual of ridiculous accusations and false charges, a spectacle which could only arouse in him a feeling of disgust?

Serious oppositionists consoled themselves by saying that they were not the first to know such demoralising conditions of life and struggle, that the Bolsheviks had also been a little group torn by splits before becoming in 1917 the mass party of the workers, triumphing in the first victorious revolution of the century.

To be sure, they were living in the ebb-tide that followed the defeat of the revolution in Europe after the German fiasco of 1923. They had no control over the factors of possible success – a fresh wave of workers' struggles that would bring hopes of revival. No such upsurge occurred between 1923 and 1933. True, the Chinese revolution coincided with the organisation and early development of the United Opposition, particularly in the USSR, but the defeat of the former announced the defeat of the latter and thrust back still further those who wanted to be the "vanguard".

After 1929 the world situation was wholly dominated by the crisis in Germany, the rise of Nazism and the joint efforts of the Social Democrats and the Stalinists to prevent any united front against this mortal danger. A change of policy by the KPD on this crucial question would doubtless have made it possible to begin a serious struggle for "rectification" and perhaps to reverse the situation. But that did not happen.

It seems, indeed, that Trotsky realised then that abandoning the prospect of "rectification", and so of opposition within the Third International, meant that definitive "victory" over capitalism and Stalinism was put off until an historical period which he would not live to see. The brief rise of the opposition had altogether proved, contrary to his forecast in *The New Stage*, to be just a "mere ripple" after the breaking of the wave in October.

2. *The Right Opposition*

The Right opposition was the other international trend in the Comintern. It, too, had its ideological source in the USSR, in the ideas of Bukharin and the trend led by him, Rykov and Tomsky.

This movement developed from the apparatus of the Comintern, into which Bukharin's presidency had brought a number of men who were devoted to his ideas and to him personally, and from the leadership of several national sections, including the KPD and the CP of the United States.

Its men were also old-timers, less distinguished, perhaps, than those of the Left opposition, but with more positions and more experience in the apparatus. To be mentioned are Jules Humbert-Droz, secretary of the International, and Thomas, his representative in Germany, and also the Italian Tasca, the Americans Lovestone and Bertram D. Wolfe, the Canadian MacDonald, the Swede Kilbom, the Spaniards Maurín and Gorkin, the Indian M.N. Roy and the Germans Brandler and Thalheimer, of course, together with Paul Fröhlich and Jakob Walcher, Rosa Luxemburg's old pupils.

In the period of Stalin's alliance with Bukharin the "Right" was rather a somewhat loose network, except in Germany, where it fought in 1928 for power in the party. It was Stalin's offensive in 1929 that compelled the personnel of the international apparatus to make a choice.⁴⁸

One of the two parties that were still at this time controlled by Right oppositionists was the Swedish CP: a unique case, since it resisted the decree of the International and continued as a party for years after its expulsion. Everywhere else the "Rights" who did not agree to abjure found themselves expelled and made targets for attack by the reorganised parties.⁴⁹

a) *The German Right: the Brandlerists*

It was in 1921 that Heinrich Brandler was put at the head of the KPD, following the "leftist error" of the March Action. The selection was made by the leaders of the International and it was well-advised. Brandler was a solid worker-activist, an excellent organiser, a simple and popular man who had been one of the *Spartacus* group. He had a good entourage of men of his own age and of different experience, such as August Thalheimer, a talented journalist,

⁴⁸ Theodor Bergmann: 50 Jahre KPD (Opposition), 30.12.1928 – 30.12.1978. Der Beitrag der KPD zur marxistischen Theorie und zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Versuch einer kritischen Würdigung, Hanover, SOAK-Verlag, 1978.

⁴⁹ Except where otherwise indicated, hereafter the source is Robert J. Alexander's work.

who was the party's theoretician at this time, and activists who had been tested in class battles, like Jakob Walcher, the trade-union organiser, Paul Böttcher, Paul Fröhlich and the bulk of the working-class Spartacist generation of the KPD, together with some of the "Independents" from the USPD.

For a whole period Brandler had responded to what was expected of him by the Comintern's leaders, with his very firm attitude – some considered it too firm – towards the "Left" of Ruth Fischer and Maslow, which he saw as Leftist and adventurist. Unconvinced that the German October was nigh, he nevertheless let himself be won over in Moscow by the enthusiasm of the Russians, and worked with them, especially Trotsky, in meticulously preparing for it.⁵⁰

His obvious last-minute hesitations and the fact that it was he who gave the signal for retreat nevertheless assigned him the role of ready-made scapegoat for the terrible fiasco of 1923. Bewildered, Brandler thought he could extricate himself by blaming Trotsky. However, this recantation did not save him from removal from the party's leadership. In drawing the lesson of 1923 he and those close to him thereafter denied that revolution had been possible at that time, thereby setting up a wall between themselves and the Trotskyists.⁵¹

Exiled in Moscow, Brandler did not lose contact with his comrades, but rallied to the "wisdom" of the Russian Right. In November 1928 he thought the moment had arrived for his comeback. The KPD's Central Committee had discovered that one of the party's treasurers, Wittorf, had dipped into the till for personal ends and that the affair had been covered up and the guilty man protected by the all-powerful general secretary of the party, Stalin's protégé Ernst Thälmann. The Central Committee suspended Thälmann from his responsibilities, which Stalin saw as an act of *lèse-majesté*. The Central Committee was called upon to repudiate and break with the "Rights" who had led it into revolt. The majority bowed. Those who refused to bow were expelled and formed themselves into a party opposition (*KPD-Opposition*; KPO).⁵² They did not manage to carry with them the "old lady", Rosa Luxemburg's comrade in arms, who had cautiously protected and encouraged them until then, Clara Zetkin, but they did succeed with "Comrade Thomas". The Right Opposition in the Comintern was born.

b) *The Lovestoneites*

Jay Lovestone (Jakob Liebshtein), the son of immigrants from Eastern Europe, had joined the CPUSA when very young and had at once plunged into the fight that was raging between the three rival factions. This man had remarkable abilities as an organiser and acquired the reputation of a redoubtable manoeuvrer, experienced in the quarrels within the party apparatus. Having become general secretary in 1927, receiving the endorsement of the party congress only later, he dominated the party for two years. Associated personally with Bukharin, he acted as his advisor on American affairs. He distinguished himself in 1928 by

⁵⁰ Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, pp. 305–328.

⁵¹ Broué, *Revolution en Allemagne*, p. 792.

⁵² Karl Hermann Tjaden: *Struktur und Funktion der KPD-Opposition (KPO). Eine organisationssoziologische Untersuchung zur Rechts-Opposition im deutschen Kommunismus zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik*, Meisenheim am Glan, Hain, 1964; Bergmann, *50 Jahre KPD (Opposition)*; and id., "Gegen den Strom". *Die Geschichte der Kommunistischen-Partei-Opposition*, Hamburg, VSA, 1987.

organising violence against the "Trotskyists", whose homes were broken into and ransacked and themselves assaulted and beaten, hundreds being expelled from the party.

But his own turn came, seemingly unexpected by him. He did not agree to Stalin's "proposals" when the latter wanted to bring him to Moscow to work in the Comintern, so as to isolate him from the American party. The resistance put up to this scheme by the American party's delegates in Moscow only made things worse. Stalin himself led the onslaught during the session of the Comintern's Presidium in May 1929. The disgraced leader had not even had time to leave Moscow when he was supplanted as head of the party, and he learnt two days after returning home that he had been expelled as one of a tumbril of between 150 and 200 activists, with whom he proceeded to found the CPUSA (Majority Group), which went on to publish first *Revolutionary Age*, then *Workers' Age*.

c) *Other Groups*

Born in the apparatus, around men whose authority was also derived from the methods of the apparatus, the Right opposition, unlike the Left opposition, succeeded in taking out whole sections, regional organisations and even an entire party.

The PCI educated in the polemic against the Bordighist Left had been very close to Bukharin, and Ercoli (Palmiro Togliatti) did not hide this at the Sixth Congress. But Stalin knew how to overcome resistances from a party of émigrés. Togliatti capitulated. Angelo Tasca (Serra) was expelled, along with Ignacio Silone (Pasquini). Togliatti bowed.

It was from the Swiss Communists that resistance came to Stalin's decision – taken without even convening the Presidium of the Comintern – to compel the German Central Committee to restore Thälmann to his functions. Humbert-Droz wired his disagreement and stood firm in face of Stalin when the Presidium met. He was supported by Clara Zetkin. For reasons unknown Stalin spared him and kept him under close supervision in the Comintern apparatus.

In this way the damage in Switzerland was kept within limits. All it amounted to was that the CP's Schaffhausen organisation, led by Walter Bringolf, refused to follow Humbert-Droz's advice and was expelled. The Swiss Communist opposition formed around Schaffhausen, with its press, apparatus and deputies, had for a time an influence, electoral and social, that was much greater than that of the official party in this region.

There was no Humbert-Droz in Sweden. The CP, led until now by Karl Kilbom, followed almost in its entirety the leaders who were expelled, taking with it the apparatus, the press, positions in the trade unions and elsewhere and the majority of the Communist electorate. The Norwegian opposition group of Erling Falk, with the review *Mot Dag*, and the Finnish and Danish groups followed from afar the example of Stockholm. They all threw themselves into trade-union work which brought them positions that they maintained on a line of "loyal opposition" to the reformist bureaucracy. The influence of the Brandlerists was at the outset the determining factor for all these groups.

In Spain a whole section of the CP – one-third of its members – left the party after the expulsion of its Catalan-Balearic Federation headed by Joaquín Maurín. This Federation was

soon joined by a small party which was in trouble with the Comintern because of its "Catalanist" tendencies, the *Partit Comunista Catalá*. Maurín and his comrades also blamed the Comintern for an opportunist line which called on the Communists to participate in the parody of a Cortes under Primo de Rivera. Nevertheless, they were classified as "Rights" because their international contacts and Maurín's personal friendships – he was Souvarine's brother-in-law – were on the Right.⁵³

It was likewise on the national question that the CP of Alsace found itself embattled on the side of the Right opposition, owing to the PCF's refusal to take account of partial national demands. It carried with it the overwhelming majority of the Alsatian Communists and those who voted for them.

The Right opposition in Czechoslovakia no longer had with it, when it came into being in October 1929, a sector of the party apparatus, but it did control the "Red trade unions" of the International All-Trade Union Organisations, which had 40,000 members. With a membership of 6,000 at the start, through the adhesion of men like Neurath from the Left, it controlled the People's Houses and other labour-movement institutions. Trotsky fought hard against his comrades in Czechoslovakia who thought that the Right opposition could provide a common shelter for different political "families" in the party.

The Indian M.N. Roy was one of the stars of the Comintern in its early days, before becoming an admirer of Stalin – who looked on him, however, as a "Bukharinist" and began persecuting him quite soon. Expelled in Moscow in 1927 and established in Berlin, Roy linked up with Brandler and, especially, with Thalheimer, who became, as Roy put it, his *guru*. He was to return to India to form there a Communist opposition which he wanted to follow the original Communist line in China, by working within the Congress Party.

A faction in a faction that was small already, the Right opposition in Austria, founded in 1929, is worth mentioning only because it was headed by the former youth leader Willi Schlamm, who, after 1933, edited in exile for some months the journal *Die Neue Weltbühne*.

The persons in the Communist movement in Canada who led the Montreal and Toronto groups, Jack MacDonald and William Moriarty, played no role independent of Lovestone's opposition. Willem van Ravesteyn and David Wijnkoop formed in 1926 an opposition CP in the Netherlands.⁵⁴ Diego Rivera, a personal friend of Bertram D. Wolfe, gave money to the Right opposition but did not join it.

d) The Programme of the International Right Opposition

The United International Communist Opposition (UICO, or *Internationale Vereinigte Kommunistische Opposition*, IVKO) was born in 1930 at a congress in Berlin at which the

⁵³ Victor Alba, Stephen Schwartz: Spanish Marxism versus Soviet Communism. A History of the P.O.U.M., New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1988, pp. 1–88.

⁵⁴ The Communist Party of Holland Central Committee (Communistische Partij Holland-Centraal Comite; CPH-CC). Robert J. Alexander (The Right Opposition, p. 272) is mistaken when he confuses this party with the Revolutionary Socialist Labour Party (Revolutionair Socialistische Arbeiderspartij; RSAP), which was founded in 1935 through a merger of the RSP and the Independent Socialist Party (Onafhankelijke Socialistische Partij; OSP).

report was presented by Lovestone. He described the movement "not as a new Comintern" but as "the organisational centre for the restoration and reconstruction of the Communist International".⁵⁵

The programmatic "Platform" recalled the "basic principles" of "Communism", "the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat, in the form of a Soviet state, as the necessary transition to a classless socialist society" and "defence of the Soviet Union as a workers' state." The means was to be a united world-wide party, governed by the rules of democratic centralism. It was defined for the moment as a "tactical tendency organised within the Comintern". To achieve its aim, a relentless struggle must be waged against both open reformism and the hidden reformism of the centrists. The programme criticises the Stalinist theory of the "third period" which, it claimed, "results not from a real analysis of world capitalism but from a schematic transference of the main stages of socialist construction in the Soviet Union." The programme positioned itself for the united front, the aim of which "is to win for Communism the majority of the working class" and to organise the workers' struggle. It condemned the policy of splitting the trade unions and advocated reunification wherever there had been a split. As regards the party's internal regime, the programme emphasised the need for an international leadership which should be "united and centralised, based on representatives of the parties who are able to make their own evaluation of class relations in their respective countries and who are not mere functionaries of the international leadership but representatives who actually enjoy the confidence of their own sections." It called for election of officials, organisation of genuine discussions, free discussion before action was decided on, and expulsion of corrupt elements. It demanded restoration of party membership for "everyone expelled for opposing the present ultra-left line."⁵⁶

One is surprised by the programme's absolute silence on policy within the USSR. The leaders of the Right opposition were known as Bukharinists, and some of them were even personal friends of Bukharin. It would be childish to imagine that their silence was due to fear of compromising their Soviet friends. They account for it themselves, even though in a rather formal way, by their care to let those concerned have the first say on the affairs of each country. The Brandlerists, they said, had not allowed the Russian party to interfere in Germany, and it was precisely for that reason that they were refraining from any comment on the policy of their Russian comrades. The Left opposition people said that Brandler, in particular, always hoped that Stalin would come to his senses and that, faced with the imminent disaster brought on by his henchmen, would appeal again to those who had been loyal and discreet opponents of his policy and the enemies of his enemies. This was, in any case, an attitude which led Brandler to denounce loudly "the Trotskyists" and to approve of the first two of the Moscow trials.

e) Rise and Decline

The Right opposition began by scoring successes everywhere that it possessed firm bases of support, in so far as it attracted those who were disgusted with the sectarianism and absurdity of the "third period" policy. But, while refusing to distance itself from Stalin's policy

⁵⁵ *Revolutionary Age*, 7 March 1931.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 April 1931.

in the USSR, it also had great difficulty in differentiating itself from the Left Social Democrats who were also fighting for the united front.

There are, of course, unsettled questions regarding membership numbers. Were there 1,000 or 6,000 Brandlerists in 1929? Did the Lovestoneites number 300 or 1,500? The truth is hard to establish.

Brandler's German KPO had, to start with, a solid organisation with eight weeklies printing a total of 25,000 copies and a daily paper, *Arbeiterpolitik*. In its strongholds, such as Thuringia, the KPO got some good electoral results, down to 1932, when it had 21 municipal councillors and the KPD had 38. It had activists in the trade unions, especially in the steel industry union (*Deutscher Metallarbeiter-Verband*; DMV). Its propaganda was centred on the need for a united front against the Nazis and criticism of the divisive policies of the SPD and KPD.

The Swiss KPO had practically taken over the inheritance of the official party in Schaffhausen, with sufficient support in that area to ensure in 1932 the election of Walter Bringolf as Mayor of Schaffhausen. The Swedish CP had stood up bravely to the attacks by the "official" CP which the Comintern had reconstituted, and won even more votes than that party in the elections of 1932, although its position in the trade unions was rather weak.

Lovestone's group in the United States was distinguished by its exceptional skill in the field of organisation. It published a good weekly, *Workers' Age*, and some specialised organs, including a journal in Yiddish. It established close relations with intellectuals who leant towards Marxism, such as V.F. Calverton, and played a considerable role in *Modern Monthly* and *Marxist Review*. Above all, it very soon placed its activists in the trade unions, starting with Local 22 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and was able to give confidence to a number of officials who were rebelling against the AFL bureaucracy. Convinced of "American exceptionalism", it knew how to adapt itself to the circles it penetrated, and acquired an influence well beyond its actual size.

A man on his own, M.N. Roy was undoubtedly the Right-wing Communist who effected the most impressive breakthrough. He sent out from Berlin a manifesto which explained that the CP of India was unable to attract the masses and that India could not become a Soviet Republic in the near future. The Communists' duty was to free the revolutionary independence movement from bourgeois influence and, to this end, they had to lay siege to the national mass organisations, primarily the Congress party. The few months of activity that Roy enjoyed between his return to India at the end of December 1930 and his arrest at the end of July 1931 enabled him to lay some foundations. Having entered the Congress Party, the Royists formed within it the Action Committee for Independence and, later, the League for Independence. Roy himself achieved a position of hegemony in the wings of the Central Peasants' League. After his arrest his comrades gained important positions – two vice-presidencies – in the All India Trade Union Committee (AITUC), which they sought to lead towards unity.

Connected only very remotely with the Right opposition, the members of Maurín's Catalan-Balearic Federation, which had become the *Federación Comunista Ibérica*, with, grouped around it, the Workers and Peasants Bloc (*Bloque Obrero y Campesino*; BOC), also had big successes, with their Barcelona journal *La Batalla* and their activists well placed in the trade

unions, especially in Catalonia. They were to play an important part in 1934 with the slogan of "Alianza Obrera", which was taken up by wide sections of the labour movement and with the part played by their people in the revolt in the Asturias.

Yet these promising developments failed to produce the fruits that were counted on at the beginning of the 1930s. This was because, first, recruitment, which had been effected at the start from the ranks of the party memberships, was not renewed to any great extent, and also because these oppositions seemed to be so many coteries, each with its own language and look, at the very moment when there was a new stirring of activity among the masses. Then, because the attitude of the leaders towards the internal policy of the USSR was less and less comprehensible to many, above all in the opposition's own ranks. Brandler hoped to be taken back and, as we have seen, defended the verdicts in the Moscow trials of 1936 and 1937. The Lovestoneites had the same attitude, though perhaps a little more aggressively, with Lovestone joining in 1934 in the shouting against "Kirov's murderers", denouncing Trotsky's statements about "Thermidor", "civil war" and Stalin's crimes, and insisting in 1936 that no-one could doubt the confessions of the accused in the trials. What at the start had given them an advantage over a Left opposition that was too "Russian" now turned into a weakness, since they had nothing to say on the question around which the principal differentiation was taking place.

Fundamentally, the sections of the Right opposition were very soon torn apart by centrifugal trends. Where they enjoyed mass influence, as in Czechoslovakia, Sweden and Schaffhausen, they were tempted to "regularise" a situation which made them a reasonable socialist alternative to Stalinism by joining the Social Democrats and their Left wing, which was starting to develop on a serious scale. Elsewhere the activists of the Right Opposition turned towards solutions that might have enabled them to approach the most militant and youngest sections and "win them for Communism". This was the case with the minorities in Germany and in the United States. As Hitler's accession to power drew nigh, since the "rectification" had not been accomplished, more and more numerous were the activists who wanted to take the path of creating a "new party", coming round to the point of view adopted by Trotsky in 1933.

Unhappy with Brandler's openly pro-Stalinist position and considering that it was not possible to remain silent on the USSR while criticising the Comintern's policy in Germany, Alois Neurath went over in 1932 to the Left opposition. In January 1933 most of the Right opposition in the Czech lands, led by Muna and Berger, decided to join the Social-Democratic Party.

After the failure of Humbert-Droz's negotiations with the Comintern for reintegration of the Schaffhausen group in the Swiss CP, Bringolf joined the Socialist Party, into which he was soon to be followed by... Humbert-Droz.

From this time forward Maurín's comrades concerned themselves little with struggle inside the Spanish CP and dreamt of creating a new party. This was formed in September 1935 by a merger of the BOC with a whole series of smaller organisations, including the *Izquierda Comunista*, which had emerged from the Left opposition. The new party was the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*; POUM). The history of the POUM, murdered during the civil war on the charge of "Trotskyism", obviously falls

outside the limits of this study, for it cannot be linked historically in an exclusive way with either the Left or the Right opposition.

Actually, the Right opposition, like the CPs themselves in the 1920s and like the Left opposition from its birth, was subject to successive splits. In the United States it was abandoned by Ben Gitlow and then by Herbert Zam, who joined an "all-inclusive" Socialist Party. Others were to be attracted by the regrouping which the Trotskyists tried to bring about after giving up their "opposition" line, in particular, first of all, with A. J. Muste's American Workers Party (AWP) which became the Workers' Party of the United States. The Right opposition in the USA survived only as a "network" and perhaps a group of friends, down to the war, when Lovestone made his turn to the *union sacrée*. The line was drawn.

In Germany the Walcher-Fröhlich minority raised much earlier the question of attitude towards Stalinism and the need to create a new party, even a new International. At the beginning of 1932 this group left the KPO and joined the SAP, an organisation with several tens of thousands of members which had broken away to the Left from the SPD and which Walcher was hopeful of "winning for Communism". Checked in its new advance by Hitler's victory, the SAP (led by Walcher after 1933) was to work with the Trotskyists, signing the "Letter of the Four" in favour of a new International in 1934, and then to join the Popular Front.⁵⁷ The KPO shook off its pro-Stalinist routine in the Spanish war. At the end of the world war, however, Brandler, returning from exile in Cuba, still thought he might be readmitted to the KPD.

In 1933 the Swedish CP, which was also attracted by the power of the Social-Democratic parties in Scandinavia, broke with the international opposition and became a "socialist" party. The Alsatians ended up in a much worse way. Their deputy J.P. Mourer voted in 1935 for the Doumergue Government, and the group itself, in its "autonomist" zeal, linked up with groups that were manipulated by the Nazis, which carried it very far out during the war. The opposition in Czechoslovakia remained restricted to the Asch region down to 1938, and vanished when Hitler's troops entered.

M.N. Roy, released in 1936, came almost at once up against a group that was operating on his own territory, the Congress Socialist party, which he called a "petty-bourgeois group" and blamed for talking too much about its "socialist" aim. Attached to Stalin, he kept his distance from the international opposition, which he considered too anti-Stalinist in 1938, and broke with Communism, taking his followers with him.

In February 1938 the remains of the Right opposition took part in a regrouping of organisations, most of whom belonged to the London Bureau initiated by the British ILP and the German SAP, with a view to "gathering together, on the basis of Marxist-Leninist principles, all forces ready to co-operate in the revolutionary struggle against all imperialist forces, against the so-called democratic capitalist powers as well as against the fascist

⁵⁷ Hanno Drechsler: Die Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SAPD). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung am Ende der Weimarer Republik, Meisenheim am Glan, Hain, 1965.

powers, against imperialist exploitation, war and poverty." The revolutionary Marxist international, formally constituted in April 1939, did not survive the war.⁵⁸

It is difficult to give a date for the disappearance of the Right opposition. Its historian, Robert J. Alexander, wonders about what seems to him a paradox: "... although the Right opposition as a group remained loyal to the formal 'Communist Opposition' idea much longer than did Trotsky and his followers, when they finally broke with the notion they went much further than the Trotskyists in repudiating the whole of Marxism-Leninism."⁵⁹ The explanation given by the American historian is that the "Rights" had no body of doctrine around which to rebuild themselves, whereas "Trotskyism" existed, meaning the theoretical corpus around which the former Left-oppositionists and their successors gathered.

The difference between the two oppositional groups would thus, in this view, consist simply in the fact that Trotsky, expelled from the USSR, was able to express himself, develop and adapt his teachings, whereas Bukharin, *de facto* a prisoner in the USSR, was unable either to theorise or to make this known, although there was potentially present in his ideas a questioning of "Leninism" that was not to be found in Trotsky.

This explanation, though ingenious, fails to convince. It even seems to me to be too sophisticated. It was its neutrality on the matter of the Soviet Union's policy that constituted the "Achilles' heel" of the Right opposition. One may think what one likes of Trotsky's system of ideas. It cannot be denied, though, that it offered a coherence in the domain of ideas, a dialectical link with the development in progress, and that it contributed, on the way, those thousand-and-one verifications which have caused Trotsky to be described, wrongly, as a "prophet". And on the USSR he expressed himself clearly. What credit could be claimed for those Communist leaders (even in the realm of coherence of ideas, let alone in respect of honesty and morality) who for years approved or were silent about the crimes committed by Stalin against his own party and Lenin's comrades?

Recent experience shows, after all, that Stalinism and the demoralisation which it engenders, whether one is executioner or victim, are the quickest road for passing from Communism to the hardest anti-Communism. Was that not the fate of Lovestone, to take the most extreme case?

At all events, it is in this sense that the history of the oppositions in the Comintern, even though expelled from it, is an integral part of the history of the Communist International itself.

⁵⁸ Willy Buschak: Das Londoner Büro. Europäische Linksozialisten in der Zwischenkriegszeit, Amsterdam, IISG, 1985.

⁵⁹ Alexander, The Right Opposition, p.12.