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# DID TROTSKY COLLABORATE WITH STALIN

A REPLY TO J. R. JOHNSON OF THE WORKERS PARTY

by

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## DID TROTSKY COLLABORATE WITH STALIN

(A Reply to J.R. Johnson of the Workers Party)

### I. JOHNSON'S "BABE-IN-THE-WOODS" THEORY

In the course of a sketch of Trotsky's life and work, J.R. Johnson of the Workers Party (Shachtman group) in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL of September 1940 attacks the charges against Trotsky made by the group to which the present writer belongs. Specifically, Johnson attempts to refute our charge that Trotsky "entered into a pact with Stalin to deceive the Russian people." (THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, Sept. 1940, p. 157)

Some time ago, when we challenged Hugo Oehler of the Revolutionary Workers League to refute the charges that our group levels against Trotsky, we declared - and we declare again - that, if our charges are not true, we should be branded as a gang of despicable calumniators. (See "Why is Oehler Silent On Trotsky," THE BULLETIN, Feb. 1940) Oehler evaded the issue.

Basing ourselves upon documentary evidence, we charged that Trotsky joined Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev in the conspiracy to entrench themselves in power, to secure a permanent stranglehold upon it. We further state that, owing to the process of centralization of power in Stalin's hands, Trotsky, as well as Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin - and even bureaucrats who lasted as long as Litvinov and Voroshilov - failed to achieve their original purpose of entrenching themselves in power. Obviously, our accusation imputes dishonest motives to Trotsky. Johnson, on the other hand, attributes honest intentions to Trotsky. Trotsky, says Johnson, in all sincerity asked Stalin to act honorably:- "Never was the leopard more sincerely asked to change his spots."

Trotsky, declares Johnson, was politically naive when it came to tackling the Stalinist issue:- "But his political naivete and the idealism of his character are almost incredible but for his own unsuspecting documentation .... He himself reports not one single action of his own to counter Stalin's intrigues." Johnson assures his readers that in the hands of the Stalin clique Trotsky was an innocent babe:- "In the hands of Kamenev and Stalin he was a child." If one should accept Johnson's interpretation, one must reach the conclusion that Trotsky had become a political Red Riding Hood, an artless, simple little child out of the fairy tales, lost in a jungle filled with ferocious Stalinist denizens: "Trotsky warned and warned and warned again, wandered about like a child in a forest of wild beasts." Thus, Trotsky, a man who fought Kerensky and Miliukov, Chernov and Tsereteli, a man who fought the Left S.R. terrorists, the White Guards, fought Kautsky, fought at times even Lenin, was, according to Johnson, a "child" in the hands of Kamenev and Stalin. Furthermore, Johnson would have the workers believe, it was as a result of being a "child" in his dealings with the Stalin clique that Trotsky helped to save Stalin's opportunist neck in the bureaucratic outrages connected with the National Question in 1922-23:- "Undoubtedly owing to the political situation Trotsky, rightly or wrongly, submitted to the suppression of Lenin's Testament and assisted Stalin to get out of the hole he was in on the National Question." Writing in tones of apology for Trotsky's actions, Johnson alludes to them as "tactical compromises." Having drawn a picture of a naive political infant, Johnson declares that Trotsky "was bound to

fail." And, Johnson charges, this is something the present writer fails to see:- "What this critic fails to see is that whatever policy Trotsky was following, whatever tactical compromises he found it necessary to make, he himself, being the man he was, was bound to fail."

Let us examine objectively the history of the rise of Stalinism and determine whether the picture Johnson paints is a faithful reproduction of facts or is the purest fiction. We shall deal first with the National Question.

It was upon this question that Lenin planned to open the battle at the XII Congress of the Party, before the entire proletariat, to wipe out Stalin:- "The bureaucratic degeneration of the state has rested like a millstone upon the national policy. It was upon the national question that Lenin intended to give his first battle to the bureaucracy, and especially to Stalin, at the 12th Congress of the party in the spring of 1923." (L. Trotsky, THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED, p. 170) This was not something which Trotsky learned many years after the event. He knew Lenin's definite intentions with respect to Stalin and Stalin's policies. Speaking of the period of the eve of the XII Congress at the beginning of 1923, Trotsky wrote:- "Lenin's intentions now were quite clear to me; by taking the example of Stalin's policy he wanted to expose to the party, and ruthlessly, the danger of the bureaucratic transformation of the dictatorship." (MY LIFE, p. 484) Trotsky's clarity regarding Lenin's intentions did not come to him merely from observation and deductive reasoning. Trotsky himself reports that Lenin actually talked to him about the need to reorganize the apparatus in order to stifle the rising monster of bureaucratism:- "The policies of Stalin became for Lenin in the last period of his life the incarnation of a rising monster of bureaucratism. The sick man must more than once have shuddered at the thought that he had not succeeded in carrying out that reform of the apparatus about which he had talked with me before his second illness.

A terrible danger, it seemed to him, threatened the work of his whole life!" (L. Trotsky, THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, August 1934, p. 41. My emphasis-G.M.)

There cannot be the slightest doubt that Trotsky was fully aware of the need to remove Stalin from leadership and to break up the Stalin clique. Trotsky knew that Lenin had designated the XII Congress of the Party scheduled to be held in April 1923 as the proper battleground of the fight of Leninism against Stalinism. In fact, Trotsky knew that Lenin, because of his rapidly increasing illness, felt it necessary to start the bombardment against Stalin even before what he considered the proper time. Lenin's secretary, Fotiyeva, informed Trotsky of this:- "Before it is too late...I am obliged to come out openly before the proper time!" Lenin had stated. (MY LIFE, p. 485) To this extent, Trotsky was given to understand, was an immediate battle against Stalin a matter of life-or-death for the proletarian dictatorship.

A few days prior to the XII Congress, there was held in Kharkov the VII All-Ukrainian Party Conference. The Central Committee, headed by Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, was carrying out the scheme of bringing all the Soviet Republics under the bureaucratic control of the Moscow leaders. The Ukrainian workers had to be duped into accepting the treacherous policies of the Stalin clique. The events we are referring to occurred early in 1923 shortly after Trotsky had received warnings, advice and political guidance from Lenin on the problem of exposing and destroying the Stalin clique. In his discussions with Lenin, Trotsky had given the impression of full agreement with Lenin's line.

An influential member of the Politburo was dispatched by the Stalinist Central Committee to the Ukraine to address the VII All-Ukrainian Party Conference and bring to the masses the knowledge of the tasks to be taken up by the forthcoming XII Congress of the Russian Communist Party. This influential member of the Politburo was Trotsky:- "In a conversation with the

reporter of the RATAU Comrade Trotsky gave out the information that the Central Executive Committee of the Russian Communist Party entrusted him to appear at the All-Ukrainian Party Conference to deliver a report on the activity of the Central Committee." (PRAVDA, April 6, 1923) It will be remembered that Trotsky's mind was not beclouded with any illusions about the pernicious character of the policies of the Stalinist Central Committee. After Trotsky delivered his report defining the tasks of the forthcoming XII Congress of the Russian Communist Party, the Conference adopted a resolution in full accord with the evaluation and meaning Trotsky imparted to the policies of the Central Committee headed by the conspiratorial trio of Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev:-

"The business of the conference began with the hearing of Comrade Trotsky's report on the tasks of XII Congress of the R.K.P....As a result of Comrade Trotsky's report a resolution was adopted, in which the conference greets the CORRECT line of the C.C. of the R.K.P. and with satisfaction records THE FIRM AND CAPABLE LEADERSHIP. The Conference considers that the party is solidly unified, the influence of the masses grows everywhere." (IZVESTIA, April 11, 1923. My emphasis and capitals - G.M.)

Trotsky had not uttered a word exposing the conniving Stalin clique or revealing that Lenin had set the demolition of this power-usurping centre as the task of the forthcoming XII Party Congress! How can one describe correctly and without bias Trotsky's act in the momentous situation obtaining in the Soviet Republic? Was this action an exhibition of the characteristics of a child, among which are simplicity, limited understanding, innocence? Was it a "tactical compromise" on his part to further the cause of the Ukrainian and all other workers or was it a cold-blooded double-cross of Lenin and a conscious duping of the masses? Does it require much penetration to realize that, if Trotsky had told the Ukrainian workers the truth, the Ukrainian Conference would

have approved neither the policies of the Stalinist Central Committee of the R.C.P. nor its leadership? The Conference approved these policies and this leadership as a result of Trotsky's report. If we view the situation objectively, Trotsky appears as no less than a salesman of Stalinism in the Ukraine, foisting upon the Ukrainian masses the "monster of bureaucratism" as a correct line and a capable leadership.

We must keep the dates constantly and vividly before us. Chronology here is of the utmost importance. The last stroke of Lenin's illness came on March 9, 1923. Although handicapped by his disease, Lenin, with an eye upon Trotsky, thinking him to be in complete agreement, was laying the foundation for the political and organizational annihilation of Stalin. Trotsky, in his autobiography (pp. 478-9) and in THE STALIN SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION (p. 73), disclosed the fact that some time before March 9, 1923 he was especially summoned by Lenin to discuss the question of fighting bureaucratism. They had a lengthy discussion and Lenin actually proposed to Trotsky the formation of a bloc to fight the Organizational Bureau headed by Stalin. Trotsky promptly replied that he agreed to the proposal:- "With a good man, it is an honor to form a good bloc," I replied. We agreed to meet again some time later. Lenin suggested that I think over the organization end of the question." Writing years later, in 1929, (MY LIFE, p. 478), Trotsky remarked that:- "The conversation has been very clearly recorded in my memory." Obviously, therefore, a few short weeks following this conversation with Lenin in 1923, one of its essential features, that of the need to remove the Stalinist leadership of the party, was certainly deeply impressed upon Trotsky's mind. Trotsky was entirely clear that due to the degenerating Stalinist leadership the Party was undergoing a bureaucratic degeneration in its methods and policies. Yet at the VII All-Ukrainian Conference, obviously to dispel some doubts, if there were any, Trotsky cried:- "No, comrades, no. We are not degenerating, we are changing our me-

thods and means, but the revolutionary preservation of the Party remains paramount for us." (Report at the VII All-Ukrainian Party Conference, PRAVDA, April 12, 1923) Trotsky had knowledge of the fact that the Stalin-led Russian Communist Party was the fountain-head of corruption in the Communist International, that Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev were bribing a host of careerists like Foster, Lovestone, Brandler, to enlist in the services of Stalinism. Yet Trotsky assured the Ukrainian workers that: "Our party is the best party. It is the teacher of other parties in the Communist International." (Ibid.)

Trotsky had given Lenin the impression that he was in harmony with Lenin's views and was readily forming a political bloc with him against Stalin and his clique. The All-Ukrainian Conference was held about three and a half weeks later. But at the All-Ukrainian Conference, Trotsky created so utterly different an impression that one of Stalin's Ukrainian henchmen, Petrovsky, was able to couple Stalin's name with Trotsky's and sing both their praises in the same breath! "Let us hope that Ilyich will recover from his illness. Now the old guard must rally around his name and also around our experienced leaders, Comrade Trotsky, Stalin and others." (Petrovsky, at the VII All-Ukrainian Party Conference, IZVESTIA, April 7, 1923) Obviously, had Trotsky exposed Stalin's duplicity, it would have been impossible for Petrovsky to mention Stalin as a leader to be followed and, moreover, to couple Stalin's name with that of Trotsky.

Without putting two and two together, one can never obtain a precise view of Trotsky's role in the Stalinist conspiracy. No one could have expected Trotsky himself to admit his participation in it. As a way out, he offered the excuse that, had he fought Stalin, that fight would have been represented "as my personal fight for Lenin's place in the party and the state." (MY LIFE, p. 482) Johnson readily passes on this "excuse" to his readers. A fair-minded person will agree, however, that there is an unbridgeable chasm between tactical dis-

cretion and a deliberate hoodwinking of the workers. If Trotsky's policy had been one of simply not fighting the Stalin gang as a matter of tactical discretion, then that would have appeared as such in the objective record of history. Even such an attitude would have been reprehensible enough, from the standpoint of the interests of the proletariat, for the latter demanded a ruthless struggle against Stalinism and not passive submission to it. But the facts of history establish that Trotsky's policy was not one of simply avoiding a fight against the Stalin clique. His policy was one of active and positive support to and collaboration with the Stalinist power-usurping renegades.

The XII Congress of the Russian Communist Party followed closely on the heels of the VII All-Ukrainian Party Conference. Lenin lay paralyzed in the Kremlin. Stalin's flunkie, Ordzhonikidze, had but just carried out by means of strong-arm methods a bureaucratic overturn in the Georgian Communist Party. The Stalin clique crushed the Georgian Bolsheviks, Mdivani, Tsinzadze, and others. These anti-Stalinists had received a warm support from Lenin who had written a note to them and had sent a copy of this note to Trotsky. Here is what Lenin had written to these Georgian anti-Stalinists: "I am with you in this matter with all my heart. I am outraged at the rudeness of Ordzhonikidze and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky. I am preparing for you notes and a speech." (Quoted by Trotsky in THE STALIN SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION, p. 69) Reposing confidence in Trotsky and considering Trotsky's apparent acceptance of a bloc against Stalin as having been made in good faith, Lenin had prepared an article as a political guide for Trotsky at the XII Party Congress. In his letter on the National Question which he sent to Trotsky, Lenin said that it was necessary to hold Stalin and Dzerzhinsky responsible for the Great Russian nationalistic campaign in Georgia: "It is, of course, necessary to hold Stalin and Dzerzhinsky responsible for all this out-and-out Great Russian nationalistic campaign." (Quoted by Trotsky, Ibid., p. 68) And Trotsky

continues:- "Vladimir Ilyich sent me this letter at the moment when he felt that he would hardly be able to appear at the Twelfth Congress." (Ibid., pp. 68-69) Finally, two days before Lenin fell ill again, he wrote notes to Trotsky dealing with the Georgian affair. In one of these notes, Lenin wrote:- "Esteemed Comrade Trotsky: I earnestly ask you to undertake the defense of the Georgian affair at the Central Committee of the party. That affair is now under 'prosecution' at the hands of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky and I cannot rely on their impartiality." (Quoted by Trotsky, Ibid., p. 69) These documents from Lenin were in Trotsky's possession and constituted Lenin's heavy battery which he entrusted to Trotsky to be unleashed against Stalin.

The Georgian Bolshevik, Mdivani, already removed from his post by the Stalin gang for his opposition to their bureaucratic policies, was present at the XII Congress. He bitterly complained on the floor of the Congress against Stalin. Mdivani knew Lenin had written a letter against Stalin on the National Question. Referring to Lenin's letter, he demanded:- "Why is the letter not being published?" (Stenographic Report of the Proceedings of the XII Congress, Russian Edition, p. 541) In the face of this complaint which openly brought the Georgian case upon the floor of the Congress, Trotsky, the man to whom Lenin had entrusted the defense of the Georgian Bolsheviks, maintained a "strange" silence, leaving the honest fellows to the tiger's mercy of Stalin. One of the delegates to the Congress, Yakovlev, having learned that Lenin's letter was being suppressed, demanded its publication. But Trotsky continued silent as the grave. At length, Stalin's partner-in-crime, Zinoviev, was compelled to give an "explanation" of these unprecedented proceedings. Said Zinoviev:- "Comrade Yakovlev demanded that the letter in question from Comrade Lenin should be published. The Presidium of the Congress of the Party adopted on this question a UNANIMOUS decision: not to publish for the time being this document in view of the character of those instructions

given by Vladimir Ilyich himself. If the letter up to now has not been published, it is exclusively because of the indicated reasons." (Ibid., p. 552, My capitals - G.M.)

In connection with this statement of Zinoviev, there are two points which must be taken up:- first, the implication in Zinoviev's remark that apparently Lenin himself did not want the letter to be published; and secondly, the personnel of the presidium of the Congress which unanimously suppressed Lenin's letter. In THE STALIN SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION, Trotsky declares that the excuse that Lenin did not propose that the Party should know about this letter on the National Question is not true:-

"Vladimir Ilyich attached enormous importance to the 'Georgian' question, not only because he feared the consequences of a false national policy in Georgia - a fear which has been wholly confirmed - but also because in that question was revealed to him the falseness of Stalin's whole course on the national question. The exhaustive and fundamental letter of Lenin on the national question is concealed from the party to this day. THE PRETENSE THAT LENIN DID NOT INTEND THIS LETTER TO BE READ TO THE PARTY IS FALSE TO THE CORE." (p. 68. My capitals - G.M.)

In other words, Zinoviev's implication was a plain lie put forth to cover up his fellow-conspirator, Stalin, against whom Lenin's letter was primarily directed.

We shall now take a glance at the names of those leaders of the Party composing the presidium of the XII Congress which, it will be remembered, voted unanimously to suppress Lenin's letter. Among the names of Stalin, Zinoviev, Kalinin, Voroshilov, Ordzhonikidze, Petrovsky and Kamenev, one reads the name: TROTSKY.

Again let us put two and two together and the sum tells us this: that Trotsky together with the Stalin gang voted to suppress Lenin's letter in

which the author demanded that Stalin be held responsible for the Georgian affair. Years later in exile abroad, Trotsky naturally realized that there was hardly a worker in the capitalist countries who was familiar with the proceedings of the XII Congress. No one investigated, no one even saw the necessity for a good many years to investigate what transpired at that Congress of the Party held without Lenin. The stenographic record was published by the Stalinists in Russian, the issue was limited, and very few copies found their way abroad. With relative safety, therefore, Trotsky was able to pretend that he had championed Lenin's cause against Stalin and in the course of this pretense was able to make a deceptive gesture of condemning the suppression of Lenin's letter on the National Question in which he himself had participated. And of course he was also able with a great degree of safety to keep mum about his own role in this suppression of Lenin's anti-Stalinist documents.

The protests and the reference to Lenin's letter on the part of Mdivani, Tsinzadze, and other anti-Stalinist Georgians, as well as Yakovlev's demand for the publication of Lenin's letter, remained a cry in the wilderness. With the aid of Trotsky, the Stalin clique was therefore able to secure full approval of the political and organizational policies of Stalin's Central Committee:- "The Twelfth Congress fully approves the political and organizational line of the Central Committee which assures the party serious success also for the present year." (IZVESTIA, April 20, 1923) Bubbling with enthusiasm, Stalin's fellow-conspirator, Zinoviev, issued the following announcement which makes unmistakably clear the fact that Trotsky had left open the conspirator's path to line up the XII Congress unanimously behind them:- "All our resolutions have been adopted UNANIMOUSLY." (PRAVDA, April 26, 1923. My capitals - G.M.)

Was Trotsky's attitude with respect to Lenin and the Georgian case that of an innocent babe? Does it even in the remotest sense resemble a

"tactical compromise" in the interests of the proletariat? Or is it, on the contrary, a clear indication that Trotsky had thrown in his lot with the Stalin clique, betrayed Lenin's trust, and consciously deceived the workers. We remember that in his works written abroad Trotsky himself testified to the effect that Lenin, horrified by the growth of bureaucratism in the party, had proposed a bloc with Trotsky to fight the organizational machinery of the Central Committee and to reorganize the Party apparatus. But so far in an anti-Leninist direction had Trotsky travelled by the early part of 1923, that he acquiesced in the following treacherous lie embodied in the unanimously adopted resolution at the XII Congress. This Stalinist lie said: "The Congress remarks with satisfaction the IMPROVEMENT of the organizational apparatus of the Central Committee and the entire organizational work of the Party central in general." (Resolution on the Report of the Central Committee, IZVESTIA, April 20, 1923. My capitals - G.M.) As we see, the Stalin gang left no loophole in its work of lining up the Party Congress in support of its bureaucratic machinations. It was able to accomplish this in every aspect only because Trotsky double-crossed Lenin and betrayed the cause of the Georgian and Ukrainian masses - the cause really of the entire toiling population.

And thus, the bureaucratic gathering known as the XII Congress of the Bolshevik Party was in reality the First "Congress" of the Stalinized Russian "Party." The Communist vanguard of the world proletariat, instead of witnessing a political and organizational explosion against Stalinism which would have extirpated this deadly bureaucratic cancer right at its origin, was attached, with the influential assistance of Trotsky, to a gang of power-greedy renegades who masked themselves as Leninists. Several days after the Congress, to strengthen the dangerous illusion that the Stalinist policies were Leninist, Trotsky, pointing to the imperialist reaction buffeting the international proletariat, declared that:- "What we are witnessing now is frantic reaction,

frantic reply to the STEADFAST policy of the XII Congress of our Party." (IZVESTIA, May 16, 1923. My capitals - G.M.) "The steadfast policy of the XII Congress of our Party"! Thus did Trotsky, deliberately swindling the toilers, characterize the goings-on at the Congress which officially set the stamp of Stalinism on the former Bolshevik Party! Trotsky never ceased this chicanery. Thus, in October 1933, ten years after the XII Congress, we find Trotsky still spreading the deception that the XII Congress falls into the category of Bolshevik Congresses and that it is only the subsequent Congresses which fall into the category of bureaucratic frauds:- "In reality the last congress of the Bolshevik party took place at the beginning of 1923, the 12th party Congress. All subsequent congresses were bureaucratic parades." (THE SOVIET UNION AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, pp. 24-25. My emphasis - G.M.) Is this obvious deception the work of an honest man? If Trotsky was really honest, as Johnson says he was, what was there to prevent him in 1933, while he was outside of Stalin's Soviet Union, from telling the truth about the XII Congress, that this was the first bureaucratic parade marking the gathering at which Stalinism received an official stamp of approval? It is crystal clear why Trotsky to the very end continued to palm off the fraudulent XII Congress as a Bolshevik gathering. He had something to hide - his own criminality, his connivance with the Stalin gang at the XII Congress. Here Trotsky stands self-exposed as a guilty man striving to cover up his guilt.

In the light of the historical, authentic documentary evidence, Trotsky's criminal opportunism stands out in bold relief. Unfortunately, the honest Communist workers were as remote from suspecting Trotsky's opportunism in 1923 as many of them are today. Because of that, about a decade after the events, Trotsky without fearing exposure could tell the workers some facts about Lenin's proposed struggle against Stalinism. All Trotsky had to do was to keep quiet about the fact that he had betrayed Lenin and the masses, and he was perfectly "safe."

Johnson ascribes honest motives to Trotsky. If Trotsky had really been honest during the rise of Stalinism but happened to have followed a false policy which favored Stalinism, how would Trotsky have explained his role? Very simply. He would merely have had to say approximately the following:- You say that during the rise of Stalinism I committed the following deeds, and that these deeds were false and harmful to the workers. All right, I admit these deeds. I have nothing to conceal because I had honest intentions. You may condemn me for having been wrong, but you have no grounds for questioning my honesty. Thus would a responsible leader have spoken were his motives actually honest.

But how does Trotsky describe his role in the rise of Stalinism? An examination of Trotsky's explanations of his role in the rise of Stalinism reveals that Trotsky did not follow the path which an honest man would have taken. Trotsky followed the road of deception not only in the beginning but all along in every aspect. In 1932, Trotsky wrote:- "We have indicated above the sign-posts of the final struggle between Lenin and Stalin. AT ALL STAGES Lenin sought my support and FOUND IT." (THE SUPPRESSED TESTAMENT OF LENIN, p. 32. My capitals - G.M.) History shows that Lenin did not find Trotsky's support at any stage in the struggle against Stalin. Thus, we observe that Trotsky, instead of pointing to honest motives, actually lied about his role in the rise of Stalinism. Trotsky tried to cover up his deeds. Trotsky acted not like an honest man found in the wrong, but like a criminal. By lying about his part in the development of Stalinism, Trotsky himself - indirectly, of course - exposed the dishonesty of his motives.

We have shown that to lend plausibility to his story that Trotsky had honest motives, Johnson is compelled to attribute to Trotsky "almost incredible" political naivete and to make him seem a veritable babe-in-the-political-woods. At the same time, Johnson pursues his aim of building up Trotsky as the great political leader

of the proletariat. As a result, Johnson entangles himself in a very curious contradiction. Where he whitewashes Trotsky's collaboration with Stalin, Johnson transforms him into "a very defective politician." (THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, Sept. 1940, p. 157) He speaks of "Lenin's authority and the political skill which Trotsky so sadly lacked...." (Ibid., p. 153) But where he seeks to impress the workers with the notion that Trotsky was a great political leader of the masses, Johnson pictures Trotsky as "the greatest living master of politics" (Ibid., p. 161) and as "excelling in every field he touched" (Ibid., p. 167). Obviously, Johnson is concerned not about the facts of Trotsky's political ability, but with the particular purpose that he, Johnson, has at any one moment. For each purpose he cuts out a suitable story about Trotsky's political ability. And when sometimes these purposes do not conveniently coincide, he gets himself into a glaring contradiction. Since Johnson falsifies Trotsky's whole role in the rise of Stalinism by concealing Trotsky's collaboration with the usurping conspirators, it is clear that Johnson's alibi for what he calls Trotsky's "tactical compromises" is also a falsification, that the story about Trotsky's political inability was simply concocted to suit Johnson's purposes.

## II. TROTSKYIST JUGGLING WITH THE "PERMANENT REVOLUTION"

The theoretical Rock of Gibraltar upon which the Trotskyist movement claims it rests is Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution. Johnson, for example, maintains that if Trotsky had done no more than devise this theory his claim to enduring fame would have been assured:- "Trotsky's first claim to the attention of mankind is his theory of the permanent revolution, and if he had fallen dead after correcting the last proof over thirty years ago, his place in political thought was safe." Trotsky is said by his followers to have defended his essentially correct theory of the permanent revolution against all opponents. Even against Lenin:- "In the

genuinely revolutionary wing of socialism the theory met with fierce opposition. Lenin never ceased to deride it." But, continues Johnson, Trotsky was adamant:- "Trotsky refused to concede an inch." And Johnson points out, history proved Trotsky to be correct on permanent revolution:- "The years have justified him. The Russian Revolution followed his road."

Johnson is by no means the originator of this line of unqualified statement that Trotsky was correct as opposed to Lenin on the question of the permanent revolution. As long ago as 1936, THE NEW MILITANT, politically guided by Cannon and Shachtman, presented the same line:-

"On the differences which existed between Lenin and Trotsky, neither of the two men were correct, on all the points. The peculiar part of the matter, however, is that the critics of Trotsky who attempt to find a basis for criticism in past differences, long since resolved by history, are unfortunate enough to choose THOSE QUESTIONS ON WHICH TROTSKY WAS CORRECT. THE 'PERMANENT REVOLUTION' IS ONE OF THESE." (THE NEW MILITANT, Jan. 4, 1936 . My capitals - G.M.)

No one would suspect that behind these unqualified statements there lies hidden a story which completely exposes both Trotsky and his Cannons, Shachtmans and Johnsons. And it is that hidden story that gives a complete and truthful picture about Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution both in its original, undistorted state and as it was later mutilated by its author. We shall now deal with that concealed portion of the matter.

That Trotsky, generally speaking, was correct in his theory of the permanent revolution prior to 1917, we do not question. With the claim that he defended his theory against Lenin's pre-1917 attacks, which were in many respects unjustified, we likewise have no quarrel. In their eulogy of Trotsky's work on the permanent revolution, the Trotskyite leaders, however, con-

veal the true story of Trotsky's manipulations with his theory during the Stalinist period.

The theory of the permanent revolution had a very unique history beginning with the latter part of 1923. Although he had been working in close harmony with Zinoviev-Kamenev-Stalin, these plotters for power laid plans to tear down the influential and powerful Trotsky politically and organizationally and to centralize bureaucratic power completely in their own hands. Zinoviev-Kamenev-Stalin therefore let loose a tremendous demagogic barrage designed to blacken Trotsky in the eyes of the masses. One aspect of this fraudulent barrage of accusations proceeded along "theoretical" lines. The Stalin clique, for purely factional, conspiratorial reasons, began unscrupulously to dig up all the harsh remarks Lenin had made in past years against Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution. Lenin's accusations that Trotsky's theory was absurdly Leftist, that it underestimated the peasantry, that it was in part Menshevik, were exhumed by Zinoviev-Kamenev-Stalin and hurled against Trotsky. This purely factional digging up of Lenin's old accusations would have been criminal enough even if they had been correct. It was doubly criminal since ~~Lenin's~~ Lenin's attacks on Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution in a great measure were unjustified.

To Trotsky, the dishonesty of the Stalin clique was plain, especially after he had formed a bloc with Stalin's former partners-in-crime, Zinoviev and Kamenev. Trotsky himself testifies that at that time all the secrets of the conspiratorial Troika of Zinoviev-Kamenev-Stalin became known to him. (THE CASE OF LEON TROTSKY, p.80) Trotsky, of course, was well aware that on the question of the permanent revolution he had proved correct in the main as against Lenin's pre-1917 position of "Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry." Yet, in the face of the criminal Stalinist use of Lenin's old accusations against the permanent revolution, Trotsky resorted to a shabby maneuver

which fell right in line with the Stalinist "theoretical" fakery. At the 7th Plenum of the E.C.C.I. in December 1926, Trotsky declared:-

"The differences in that epoch when I stood outside the Bolshevik Party were quite profound. Considering only the basic features, these differences were concerned with the concrete evaluation of the class relations within the Russian society and in connection with this the perspectives of the nearest revolution and the possibility of its passing from the democratic to the socialist phase. With this is bound up the question of the so-called permanent revolution. On the other hand, the differences touched upon the methods and ways of mood of the party and its attitude towards Menshevism. In BOTH these questions - and this I announced in writing by far not all the comrades who are present here were correct as against me. BUT LENIN, HIS DOCTRINE AND HIS PARTY WERE UNQUESTIONABLY CORRECT AGAINST ME." (L. Trotsky, PRAVDA, Dec.14, 1926. My capitals and emphasis - G.M.)

We see in this statement that Trotsky proclaimed that on the question of the perspectives of the revolution, which included the important question of the permanent revolution, Lenin had been correct as against Trotsky. This, as we notice, is completely the opposite of the line pursued by the Cannons, Shachtmans and Johnsons.

At that same 7th Plenum of the E.C.C.I. in December 1926, Trotsky and his allies, Zinoviev and Kamenev, made an announcement to the Communist International reiterating that on all important questions of principle and particularly on the question of the permanent revolution, Lenin had been right against Trotsky. This statement was once again repeated by them in the Platform of the Opposition published in English under the title of THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA, which they had prepared for the 15th Congress of the Party held in December 1927. They declared:-

"But the favorite accusation of late years is the accusation that we believe in 'Trotskyism.' We announced to the whole Communist International: 'It is not true that we are defending Trotskyism. Trotsky has stated to the International that in all those questions of principle upon which he disputed with Lenin, **LENIN WAS RIGHT - AND PARTICULARLY UPON THE QUESTION OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION AND THE PEASANTRY.**'" (THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA, p. 180. My capitals - G.M.)

It must be pointed out that some time before the 15th Congress one of Trotsky's lifelong and closest friends, Joffe, told Trotsky something about this question. Trotsky relates the following in his autobiography:-

"Joffe told me of his conversation with Lenin - it took place in 1919, if I am not mistaken - ON THE SUBJECT OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION. Lenin said to him: 'YES, TROTSKY PROVED TO BE RIGHT.' Joffe wanted to publish that conversation but I tried my best to dissuade him. I could visualize the avalanche of baiting that would crash down upon him. Joffe was particularly persistent, and under a soft exterior he concealed an inalterable will. At each new outburst of aggressive ignorance and political treachery, he would come to me again, with a drawn and indignant face, and repeat: 'I must make it public.' I would argue with him again that such 'evidence of a witness' could change nothing: that it was necessary to re-educate the new generation of the party, and to aim far ahead." (MY LIFE, p. 535. My capitals - G.M.)

We have seen above the manner in which Trotsky was "re-educating" the new generation of the party, by telling them a deliberate falsehood that Lenin, not he, had been correct on the theory of the permanent revolution. In his autobiography, Trotsky indicates that he had no reason to doubt Joffe's veracity. Joffe committed suicide on November 16, 1927, about a month before the 15th Party Congress. In his farewell letter to Trotsky written

just before killing himself Joffe stated regarding Lenin's acknowledgment that Trotsky had been right in 1905:- "I told you repeatedly that with my own ears I had heard Lenin admit that even in 1905, YOU, AND NOT HE, were right. One does not lie before his death, and now I repeat this again to you...." (Quoted by Trotsky in MY LIFE, p. 537. Emphasis in the original) Thus, with the additional and striking testimony obtained from Joffe that he, Trotsky, not Lenin, had been proved correct, Trotsky deliberately falsified the facts, and allowed this falsification of history to sink into the minds of the Oppositionist workers.

Just as Johnson juggles his characterization of Trotsky as it suits his specific purpose, so did Trotsky use the question of the permanent revolution to suit the given practical requirements. For example. Without uttering a single word of repudiation of his "announcement to the Communist International," without even referring to it by so much as a word, Trotsky reversed himself and at the so-called hearings of the Dewey Commission made the unqualified declaration that he had been right as against Lenin on the permanent revolution:-

"**STOLBERG:** May I ask just one more question? It is of a more historical and philosophical interest. Your theory of the permanent revolution, as I understand it from your writings, was very similar to Lenin's own. I also gather from your writings that there were some differences of a very, as far as I can see, minor nature. What, in your opinion, were the differences?"  
"**TROTSKY:** I believe in this question I **WAS RIGHT AGAINST LENIN.**"  
(The Case of Leon Trotsky, p. 49. My capitals - G.M.)

To return to Trotsky's announcement at the 7th Plenum in December 1926. Naturally, by announcing that Lenin had been right against him, he implicitly justified Lenin's attacks upon Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution as being semi-Menshevist, absurdly Leftist and a negation of the peasantry, and condemned as wrong his

own defense of his theory against Lenin's attacks. In other words, Trotsky in his own manner participated with the Stalin gang, which had so unscrupulously dug up Lenin's old accusations, in falsifying the theoretical course of the proletarian revolution.

The question arises, what precisely was behind Trotsky's act of casting theoretical truth into the Stalinist gutter. He answers this question in guarded language in his book, THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION. It appears that Trotsky had made a horse-deal with Zinoviev. It will be recalled that Zinoviev was one of the first and most vicious falsifiers of Trotsky's role in the Russian Revolution. Zinoviev had taken the lead in digging up Lenin's old accusations against Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution:- "They began more frequently to rake up my past and my old disagreements with Lenin: it became Zinoviev's specialty," writes Trotsky (MY LIFE, pp. 489-490). When Stalin and Zinoviev had parted company and the Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev bloc had been established, Zinoviev required some face-saving ideological shield to cover up his former "theoretical" attacks on Trotsky. Trotsky understood this quite well and furnished Zinoviev with the necessary face-saver. Trotsky's declaration, false to the core, at the 7th Plenum in 1926, that Lenin had been correct on the permanent revolution, constituted this face-saver, Trotsky writes:

"In 1926, in the period of the bloc with Zinoviev, Radek warned me: Zinoviev needs my declaration that Lenin was right in order TO EXCUSE a little his, Zinoviev's WRONG AGAINST ME. Naturally, I understood this well. AND THAT IS WHY I said AT THE SEVENTH PLENUM OF THE E.C.C.I. that I meant the historical right of Lenin and his party, but in no case the right of my present critics who strive to cover themselves with quotations plucked out of Lenin." (THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION, pp. 17-18. My capitals-G.M.)

Although Trotsky is employing very

careful language here, the horse-trade with Zinoviev is obvious. Trotsky's falsification of the historical correctness of his theory of the permanent revolution was made as a service to Stalin's ex-partner, Zinoviev, to excuse this blackguard's criminal acts and to render plausible his now forming a bloc with Trotsky. This unprincipled bit of horse-trading, involving a deliberate confusion of the workers, sheds revealing light on the character of the Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev bloc.

An honest worker who recognizes that truth is indispensable in the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie will undoubtedly attempt to get at the bottom of the "mysterious" discrepancies in Trotsky's own writings, and in Trotsky's writings as compared with those of his hangers-on, the Cannons, Shachtmans and Johnsons. Knowing these "Marxists" for what they are, we have no doubt that they will attempt by hook or crook to wriggle out of their uncomfortable hole. It is difficult to guess what excuses might be born in their fertile minds. They might, for example, attempt to explain Trotsky's announcement at the 7th Plenum of the E.C.C.I. as one having been made under duress of Stalin's G.P.U. Lest they do that, we suggest to the honest worker that he read the next sentence in which Trotsky actually accuses Stalin of suppressing the above-quoted announcement to the Comintern that Lenin was right on the question of the permanent revolution as opposed to Trotsky:- "That announcement, made to the whole Communist International, the Stalin group refuses to print." (THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA, p. 180). Stalin's refusal to publish Trotsky's announcement shows that the initiative for it originated on Trotsky's side and, adding to this the latter's cautious revelation of his deal with Zinoviev, we see that Trotsky's dragging his theory of the permanent revolution in the dirt was simply an out-growth of unmitigated degeneracy.

In palming off Trotsky as a great battler against Stalinism, his leading followers make an enormous hullabaloo about the permanent revolution. They

pretend that on this point Trotsky fought like a lion against Stalin. The Trotskyite leaders may even concede at times, as for example Johnson does, that perhaps Trotsky did not fight Stalin very well from an organizational and tactical standpoint, that perhaps he did not fight him at all from that standpoint. The real truth that Trotsky acted in bloc with Stalin they do not and cannot admit. But as regards the permanent revolution, here the Trotskyite leaders are unswerving in their story about the "great services" that Trotsky rendered the proletariat against Stalinism. The utter fraud of the entire Trotskyist uproar about the permanent revolution in the Stalinist period is revealed by the fact that TROTSKY HIMSELF IN THE MOST UNPRINCIPLED FASHION BESMIRCHED HIS THEORY OF THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION. And he did this in his crooked deal with Zinoviev, a deal which amounted to a freely-made gesture of conciliation to Stalin, which gesture Stalin, driving for personal dictatorship, refused to accept.

Trotsky's announcement to the Comintern, signed also by Zinoviev and Kamenev, (quoted above from THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA), completely repudiating the historical truth about his own theory of the permanent revolution, was part of the system of "confessions" which eventually found its full flowering in the Moscow Trials. Such a connection is clearly indicated in the following remark made by Trotsky himself:- "But it remains an incontestible historical fact that the preparation of the bloody judicial frame-ups had its inception in the 'minor' historical distortions and 'innocent' falsification of citations." (THE STALIN SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION, p. xxx. My emphasis - G.M.) We observe that Trotsky, while pointing to the "historical distortions" of others, "diplomatically" kept quiet about his own.

Thus, the most precious "theoretical" coin in the hands of the Johnsons, Shachtmans and Cannons turns out to be a rank counterfeit.

Perhaps the reader will feel that

there is some excuse for Johnson's distortions on the grounds that he may not be able to investigate the Russian sources which are necessary for a full understanding of Trotsky's real role in the rise of Stalinism. We are willing to grant this point. But Johnson can read English. Moreover, he has read THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA in which Trotsky quotes his 1926 declaration that Lenin, not Trotsky, had been correct on the question of the permanent revolution. In THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, Johnson refers to THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA on page 153 of his article. Nevertheless, in telling his story about Trotsky's superior theoretical vision on this question of the permanent revolution, Johnson "discreetly" omits any reference to Trotsky's denial in this very book that he had been correct on this question as against Lenin. How shall we characterize this omission on Johnson's part? It is obvious why Johnson had to omit any reference to Trotsky's 1926 statement quoted in THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA. If Johnson told the truth about this criminal statement, he would have to show that it was simply part of a horse-trade with that moral wreck, Zinoviev, which amounted to a gesture of conciliation to Stalin. In that case, obviously, Johnson's beautiful verbal castle of eulogy of Trotsky would have crashed to the ground.

\* \* \* \*

A revolutionary worker who has familiarized himself with our exposure of the concealed story of Trotsky's actual role in the degeneration of the October Revolution and the part that Trotsky's hangers-on play in covering up this story will tell them in plain words:- You fellows are a gang of political crooks. You are shielding a man who deceived and betrayed the Russian masses and the international proletariat. You have assisted him to conceal his crimes, and, depicting him as a valiant and honorable fighter against Stalinism, you are able to use him as a front, as a sort of political trade-mark. The quarrels that you have among yourselves are bureaucratic family quarrels, basically of the same type that the Stalinist bureaucrats, the

Lovestones and Fosters, were engaged in within the Stalinized "Comintern." The organizations you head are founded on a vast historical fraud.

A revolutionary worker who has the cause of the masses sincerely at heart will disentangle himself from this cobweb of fraud. He will work with might and main to expose the Johnsons, Cannons, Shachtmans, and all the other pseudo-Bolshevik political charlatans, and to destroy their vicious influence in the proletarian vanguard. Along these lines, he will be able to organize the forces of the proletarian vanguard into a new, genuine Bolshevik Party. The first step in this direction is the systematic establishment of facts bearing upon the gigantic Stalinist degeneration of the leadership of the Soviet Union and of the Comintern, and the betrayal by this renegade leadership of Lenin and the toiling masses.

The revolutionary worker, having learned the facts, will realize that Trotsky was part and parcel of the Stalinist degeneration, that in the Stalinist period the policy Trotsky gave the workers was the product of his own degeneration, and that the present-day inheritors of this degeneration and this policy are the Cannons, Shachtmans and Johnsons. Armed with truth and clarity, liberated from the shackles of pseudo-Bolshevism, the proletarian vanguard will give leadership to the masses in the struggle against all fraud, all oppression and exploitation, for the establishment of an international proletarian republic and the achievement of the next goal, the socialist system of society!

George Marlen  
New York City  
Oct. 30, 1940

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