

THE GERMAN LEFT
AND THE RUSSIAN OPPOSITION
(1926 - 28)

by Pierre Broue

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At the Follonica colloquium about Trotsky, Michel Prat, a specialist on Korsch, presented a communication on the "Crisis of the Russian Communist Party and Crisis of the Comintern 1926 - 27" (1) - a choice which is explained by the fact that the colloquium was about Trotsky and not about Korsch. None the less, it was Korschist theses which determined Michel Prat's conclusions, and we wish to discuss them here by pushing the study forward to 1928 (which he did not mention in his title, but with which he dealt in his text and his notes).

Michel Prat starts from a truism, in which he sees "a completely remarkable phenomenon", and which, he declares, has none the less remained almost totally un-noticed in the vast literature devoted to Trotsky... his "complete defeat" in 1927 and his statement that Trotsky carried on his struggle for internationalism within the Russian Communist Party (2). In Michel Prat's conclusion, he goes even further. He declares that Trotsky, like Zinoviev, elaborated a political position based "in the last analysis on the same realistic analysis of the hierarchy which in fact existed between the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern" and that consequently Trotsky was imprisoned "in a logic of activity within the framework of the Russian power monopoly" and, therefore, was led "to neglect the possibilities of an international left opposition"(3).

Of course, such an analysis could doubtless appear over the name of Korsch and could even summarise the criticism by the latter of Trotsky's role within this setting and on this point. However, in return, we may be permitted to say that such an analysis is hastily strung together, without overmuch concern for historical reality and for the real contradictions on the basis of which the policy of the oppositionists had to be elaborated.

Michel Prat's reasoning is, in fact, very simple and breaks down almost into the form of a syllogism. The Left Opposition within the German Communist Party was in 1926 of the order of 30% of its active membership in 1926; in 1929 it was negligible. In the interval, the Russian Opposition had struggled on the basis of the forces which it had in the party on which it depended, and the German Opposition strongly criticised it for having done so; it is, therefore, because the Russian Opposition neglected them that the German Oppositionists were defeated; Q.E.D. But it would be too nice if history and politics were to sketch themselves out so simply and harmoniously, in the form of black and

white propositions, which would allow the school-masters of later decades to distribute good and bad marks.

The Left in the K. P. D.

It is true that the "German Left", which corresponded in 1926 - 27 to the Unified Opposition in the Soviet Union had a real existence, unlike the Left Opposition in many other countries. For an opposition in a Communist Party it had a mass character and was solidly implanted in several authentically proletarian sectors, with leaders who had been party cadres in the preceding years. Far from being marginal, it was on the contrary situated at the heart of the most working-class of the Communist Parties in Europe, the nearest to the Bolshevik "model".

But the German Left was not born out of the same division within the German Party as that within the Bolshevik Party from which the Russian Opposition was born. The German Opposition was born out of the problems of the struggle for power in Germany, before the question of "Socialism in a Single Country", let alone "the struggle against Trotskyism" arose in the USSR. The German Left of Ruth Fischer and Maslow, of Werner Scholem and Hugo Urbahns, was neither a marginal gathering of apparatchiks nor a circle of intellectuals like its French counterparts, but the expression of an authentic current in the German working-class, and, more precisely, of that current in post-war Germany which we can call "working-class leftism", provided that we do not ever overlook that in the language of Bolshevism "left-ism" simply means "Left Communism" and is, therefore, a Communist current. This current was born out of the struggle against the Social-Democratic bureaucracy before the war, then out of the anti-militarist, pacifist struggle during the war, and bore the marks of this. It expressed itself in a spectacular way at the birth of the United German Communist Party, which, moreover, it led to ruin in the "Berlin Commune". Then it began to regain ground with the foundation in 1920 of the K.A.P.D., along the line of the Dutch Mannekoek and Gorter and of European Left-ism. It was a re-urrection of this genuine "Left-ism" when in 1921, at the heart of the German party, in its Berlin-Brandenburg district, intellectual and working-class cadres enthusiastically developed the implications for Germany of the well-known "theory of the offensive", born out of Bukharin's theoretical creativity, and unhappily in Germany by Bela Kun - what Lenin called a "belakunery".

The men and women who led this current had nothing to learn about finding their way through the jungle which the International had already become by 1921. Their captains joined the entourage of Zinoviev, whose support could be decisive to them. From their side there was considerable help which they could give to him. From the moment when they formed themselves into a current, they were determined adversaries of Trotsky... and, moreover, of Lenin... whom they believed

fundamentally to be opportunists. It was Ruth Fischer who appointed herself, in the K.P.D. as well as in the International, as the prima donna of what she called "Bolshevisation". We know today that this meant essentially subjecting the party to its apparatus and strangling the party democracy which at the time characterised the Bolshevik traditions of rival tendencies and fractions. It was Ruth Fischer, too, the extreme of the international Zinovievist fraction, who moved a resolution calling for the expulsion of Trotsky, in the working-class quarter of Wedding in Berlin.(4) These "Lefts" hunted down the least sympathy for "Trotskyism" in the party. Thus, the German Left was in no sense the German current of an international "left" of which, as we know, Trotsky was the leader. It was an authentic current, genuinely German and "Left-ist", the leaders of which were partisans in the International of Zinoviev and with the apparatus and that ever-decreasing fraction of the apparatus which he controlled in 1925. These are two adequate reasons to explain the hostility of the German Lefts to Trotsky and the poor opinion which Trotsky had at the time for the political capacities of their leaders. Consequently nothing pre-disposed them to be "Trotskyists" or even allies of Trotsky; quite the reverse.

In fact they met in a situation which many people - Michel Prat the first among them - tend to forget, because it is surprising and seems shocking to many. It is the Unified Opposition, in which Zinoviev and Trotsky stood side by side, an "un-natural marriage" in the eyes of all, whether Russian or foreigners, who had taken part in the struggles in 1923 - 24 between the 1923 Opposition and the "troika" which Zinoviev led at that time. It was only because Zinoviev, their leader and patron in the apparatus, joined in the alliance with Trotsky that Ruth Fischer, Maslov and Urbahns found themselves in a bloc with Trotsky, from whom they were separated by their conception of the United Front, their appreciation of the March Action of 1921, the causes of the fiasco of the German Revolution in 1923, and, especially, on whether there existed in Germany from 1924 onwards a "stabilisation", which Trotsky had been the first to identify, but which the "Ruthenians", as they were called, obstinately refused to see. This was how matters stood in this summer of 1926. The German Lefts understood that they were engaged, willy nilly, in an alliance with the ultra-lefts of the K.P.D., the first purpose of which was to defend the Opposition formed with Zinoviev and... Trotsky. Moreover, they did not shout out too loud about this: the first statement by the German Opposition, which is evidently inspired by the "Ruthenians", speaks of the Unified Opposition by calling it the "Leningrad Opposition", mentioned that its leaders are Zinoviev, Kamenev and Krupskaja, and refers to Trotsky only to declare that he had "rallied to Zinoviev", despite the attacks which the latter had made on him (5).

Yet at the same time this was really a new departure for this already old tend-

ency, at the beginning of summer 1926, in the struggle which was already taking the Communist world into its grasp. The leader of the tendency, since he came out of prison, was Hugo Uxbahns, the hero of the Hamburg insurrection in 1923. He was joined at the time by Maslov, likewise freed from prison, and by Ruth Fischer, who had returned from the USSR, with the complicity of Zinoviev and of Bukharin, in defiance of a decision by the E.C.C.I.(6). Before leaving she had long frank conversations with Zinoviev, during the weeks following the crushing of the "New Opposition" (7). She had been informed about and had approved the "bloc" which was being prepared in the USSR with the Zinovievists negotiating simultaneously with the Trotskyists and with the old "Left-ist" Oppositions, the Workers' Opposition and "Democratic Centralism".

The "Unified Opposition" in the K. P. D.

The struggle of the German allies of the Unified Opposition began with a serious set-back. Ruth Fischer and Maslov evidently made contact with the other tendencies on the left and the extreme left, including those known as the "ultra-lefts", and, among them, with the group of Karl Korsch, which called into question the proletarian character of the October Revolution and had been excluded from the K.P.D. a year earlier. Indeed, an internal circular of the Korsch group clearly reveals these contacts; it fell into the hands of the K.P.D. apparatus (8). In mid-August Ruth Fischer and Maslov were excluded from the party for "indiscipline" and "preparing a split" (9). Their case was to serve in the Soviet press as an example of how the Oppositionists allied themselves with the "enemies of the USSR".

It seems that this exclusion, which was a symptom of the determination of the Communist International to bring the German party into line and to break a solid democratic within it, (though it is true that this tradition had already been tampered with during the reign of Ruth Fischer and Zinoviev), had the effect at first of serving the cause of the Oppositionists by raising the indignation of the party membership. The document in which the German Lefts express their solidarity with the Russian Opposition harps upon these of workers' democracy and free discussion. This declaration was drafted as a result of discussions between the leaders of the Left, those of the Wedding Group and those of the Korsch Group. It gives to this solidarity a completely Zinovievist accent, because it refers exclusively, not to the Unified Opposition, but to the "Leningrad Opposition" (the New Opposition) which had earlier been defeated. It pronounced itself against the theory and perspective of "the construction of socialism in a single country" and condemned the "opportunist" policy of the International which flowed from it, mechanically, as the document said. It demanded that all the sections be fully informed, that the documents of the Russian Opposition be published, and warned against the bureaucratic pract-

ices which, it wrote, were leading to "a danger of a split". The document called for all the disciplinary measures to be annulled, beginning with those against Zinoviev, "the nam of the Halle Congress", that is to say, of the attachment to Communism of the German proletariat, from 1920 onwards. This text received an immense number of signatures of support. It was published on September 11, 1926 and among the 700 names, all of party members, we read those of several members of the Central Committee (Urbahns and Hans Weber, from Wedding), five deputies in the Reichstag, eight members of the Prussian Landtag and numerous party officials from various branches, including a certain number from the Communist Youth (10). The campaign for signatures was organised and carried out from one end to the other by Werner Scholem, a master organiser.

The leadership of the K.P.D. struck brutally back. In most of the districts, anyone who signed was promptly relieved of his functions. The party press campaigned against this "criminal attempt at a split", and "the "anti-Bolshevik document" of the Opposition. It obtained a number of recantations, when some withdrew their signatures under pressure or intimidation. There can be no doubt that the counter-attack of the apparatus derived a great advantage from the events in the USSR at the same time, even though Michel Prat exaggerates when he writes that "it is finally the behaviour of the Unified Opposition which was to break the international dynamic of the action of the Left of the K.P.D., thus transforming the 'Manifesto of the 700' into a ^{summit} with no tomorrow".(11)

The truth is that the Unified Opposition in the USSR, faced with the prohibition on expressing itself within the party, had attempted what it described in military terms as a "sortie". This had totally failed when it encountered the violence of a minority of the Stalinist apparatchiks under the eye of the majority of party members who, if not indifferent, were at any rate passive. These party members sometimes reversed votes favourable to the Opposition, under threats, as in the well-known case of the Aviopribor plant. The failure of the sortie and the defeat which it had undergone opened a crisis within the United Opposition, in which Zinoviev at any rate had encouraged hopes of immediate progress. The apparatus threatened to exclude the members of the Opposition, as it had done in Germany, if they did not repudiate the elements who had already been excluded and any who called for a split and for the formation of "a second party". Within a year Zinoviev had been stripped of the major part of his responsibilities and seemed to be ready to yield and to dissolve the Opposition. In order to save the Opposition, Trotsky advocated a retreat, admitting that the Opposition had acted as a fraction, the renunciation of fractional methods and the loyal acceptance of discipline, without for all that giving up the ideas which it had advanced and defended. The Political Bureau agreed to discussion on this basis, but demanded that the Left Opposition publicly disavow, among others,

Ruth Fischer and Maslov, since they were excluded from the International. The Unified Opposition accepted these conditions and formulated this disavowal in its "pacific" declaration of October 16, 1926 (12).

It cannot be denied that this disavowal could influence the militants in Germany whom the Opposition hoped to mobilise for its struggle alongside the Russian Opposition, and could rebuff less politically sensitive militants, who reasoned in terms of services rendered, let alone the un-sophisticated people, who could quite simply believe that the arguments of the Russian Opposition against "fractional activity" were dictated to it by its own experience and thinking. But it is true that in the struggle to convince the party, the line of the Unified Opposition, the necessary retreat had not been helped at all by the fact that Ruth Fischer and Maslov were excluded. The disavowal was the absolute condition, which the Russian Oppositionists could not infringe without themselves finding themselves outside the party for which they were fighting. It therefore seems to us to be necessary here to correct practically all of the terms of the appreciation of Michel Prat which we have quoted above. There was no "international dynamic of the action of the Left", but only the formation of an opposition, with results which were initially encouraging; this formation was not "broken", but only seriously embarrassed; finally, the "Manifesto of the 700", which was not and could not be a "summit", was not "with no tomorrow".

The report of the meeting of delegates of the City of Berlin, reported in "Die Rote Fahne" on October 22, 1926, three days after the "pacific declaration" of the Russians had been published in German, confirms this. The resolution of the Stalinist majority got 806 votes, against 323 for that of the Opposition, while the motion for the re-admission of Ruth Fischer and Maslov got the votes of 276 delegates (13).

Korsch's position, which was doubtless not too difficult, was to denounce violently what he called "the shameful capitulation of the leaders of the Left Opposition" (14). Urbahns attempted above all to minimise the impact of their declaration of October 16, by stressing the "pressures"/^{to} which they had been subjected, and restricted himself to making the point that the Opposition outside Russia was in danger of being weakened by it. ⁽¹⁵⁾ In fact, the Russian disavowal embarrassed the German Opposition all the more to the extent that they had not elaborated their positions on German questions, let alone international ones, and that their manifesto had centred its argumentation on the "Russian" question. The exclusions of Left Oppositionists from the K.P.D. continued after the declaration of October 16, but, as we know, they had begun long before, with the exclusion of Ruth Fischer and Laslov following those of Korsch and the other "Left-ists".

In fact, the problem is not so much that the Russian Opposition "abandoned" the

the German Opposition, but that it is in Germany that the bureaucracy applied, in the K.P.D., the methods which it was to employ later in order to try to break up the Russian Opposition. After the party conference of October 20, at which the resolution of the Central Committee was approved by 469 votes against 92 (16), the leadership called upon the leaders of the Left to repudiate publicly the declaration which Urbahns had made there on their behalf. The German Oppositionists quite correctly refused what would have been at the time a real capitulation at the same time as a denunciation of their own ideas. On November 5 Urbahns, Scholem and Schwan were excluded from the party in their turn (17). At the end of the month, Ruth Fischer, Urbahns, Scholem and Swan went to Moscow to defend the appeal which they had made against their exclusion before a commission of the E.C.C.I. We cannot doubt that in this way they were acting in full agreement with the leaders in Russia of the Unified Opposition. Ruth Fischer explained to the commission that her friends and herself had not wished to take the risk of coming with Maslov, because, as a Russian citizen, the latter might be detained against his will.(18) Like the Russian Opposition, she condemned fractional activity, but made it clear that she included in this condemnation what she called "the fractional activity of the majority". Unanimously the Executive confirmed the exclusion (19) which was to follow a severe purge of the German party. In this way the German Opposition found itself excluded from the German party a year before the Russian Opposition from the Russian party! Here - if we may say so - is the explanation of this absence which Michel Prat calls "its defeat at the Essen Congress" in March 1927 (20). It is curious that our friend clings to his idea and declares that the Russian Opposition had thus "indirectly dealt a fatal blow to the German Opposition" (21) - a conception which is a little surprising, all the same, in that it makes a total abstraction, not only of the reality of the German party, but in addition of the political force which carried through these exclusions, won these "victories" and inflicted these "defeats": that is, the international Stalinist apparatus, which in this way he has involuntarily cleansed of the guilt for all its repressive activities. To all accounts the prodecutor has had a monet's distraction and accused the wrong person when he hands out the blame for the "fatal blow".

The "Unified" Opposition outside the K.P.D.

At the moment at which the Chinese question, with the subordination to the Kuomintang which Stalin and Bukharin imposed on the Chinese Communist Party, was to give to the Russian Opposition a second wind on a battleground which concerned the International and no longer merely the Russian party, the German Opposition was obliged to re-organise in difficult conditions. Its leaders and cadres were excluded from the Communist party and its members and sympathisers were hunted down for exclusion. Forty militants who were not yet excluded

ed from the K.P.D. took part in its first national conference, on December 5, 1926 (22). This conference elected a leadership which included expellees, such as Ruth Fischer, Grylewicz, Joko, Scholem, Urbahns, etc. as well as militants who were still members, such as Bartels, Deutschmann, Eppstein, Max Hesse, Paul Schlecht, etc. It likewise decided to publish a periodical, entitled Mitteilungsblatt (Linke Opposition der KPD) starting at the beginning of January 1927, and to elaborate, for this first issue, a "Platform" which would include especially an analysis of the "relative stabilisation of capitalism" and of the unfolding of the British General Strike within the framework of this stabilisation (23).

Michel Prat regards as "symbolic" the fact that the Russian Oppositionists did not seek "the support of the oppositions until after their failure" (24), and writes that Trotsky did not begin to change his attitude towards the Left in the K.P.D. until after the Essen Congress (25). A simple reading of the document on which he bases this statement, a letter by Trotsky of April 2, 1927, disposes of it. On the basis of a reading of Mitteilungsblatt, Trotsky writes in the first place to express satisfaction that Urbahns and Fischer have carefully drawn the line between themselves and the ultra-lefts like Korsch and firmly declared for the defence of the U.S.S.R. Above all, he mentions the new analysis which this group made of the situation in Germany, and expresses satisfaction at the awareness among its leaders of the "left-ist" character of the positions which they had earlier defended about the revolutionary character of the German situation in 1924, and, in a general way, at what appears to him to be their "greater political maturity". In other words, Trotsky opens up again the question of the German Lefts which had been bureaucratically dealt with by their exclusion, in order to show the political progress which the group had made and the end of its obstinate opposition on a question of capital importance, as well as their abandoning a puerile left-ism. He took the opportunity and raised once more the question of their group being re-admitted into the Communist International. Michel Prat regards the presence of the ten delegates of the Opposition at the Essen Congress, opposing the hundreds of the Stalinist majority, no doubt as proving its "bankruptcy". He simply does not understand that Trotsky was interested in the ideas which the German Opposition was defending, nor his interest in political perspectives, which none the less were essential for the German and Russian members of the Opposition alike!

In reality it seems that during this year of 1927 the German Opposition was a veritable culture-medium, one of the high places of political discussion. One of the means by which Stalin fought against the Left Opposition in Russia was systematically sending its militants abroad on diplomatic or economic missions. Isolated from the main battle-field, the Soviet Party, they took part in the struggle of the emerging Communist oppositions, which Stalin regarded as much

less dangerous for him, because it was the Opposition in Russia which he feared above all. Ruth Fischer mentions, among those who stayed in Berlin at the time, Turiv, Kaplinsky, Issaiev, Perevertsev, Hertzberg, of the Leningrad "Old Guard" (27). In addition, she recalls her old friend, Chklovsky, who was a confidant of Zinoviev (28). We know that diplomats who were members of the Opposition came and went through Berlin, where the Ambassador Krestinsky was a member, and that the German capital received a visit from Rakovsky, from Paris, Kamenev from Rome and Safarov from Ankara. Ruth Fischer also mentions Eleazar B. Solntsev, without any special emphasis (29).

We are now beginning to know something about Solntsev. He was born at the beginning of the century and plunged into the revolutionary struggle when he was at high school. He graduated from the Institute of Red Professors in History and in Economics and was one of the most conspicuous militants of his generation in the Opposition, was close to Trotsky and highly esteemed. He was attached to the Soviet Commercial Mission in Berlin and spent a year in the German capital. It is only little by little that the man himself is beginning to emerge for us from the documents. He seems to have been especially connected with Urbahns and then with Maslov, and to have devoted himself to influencing the members of the old German Left. He was secret an adviser to the German Opposition, but also the organiser of the international opposition in Europe before going to the United States. On this account he has been sharply criticised, especially by Safarov, who seems to have ascribed a certain softness to him (30)... But let us return to the political questions.

The preparation for the Essen Congress was marked by violent confrontations - there were brutal attacks on meetings, for example, when Urbahns went to Halle on November 2 - and especially by determined bureaucratic repression, which did not hesitate to dissolve local groups or to destroy the local organisation in a workplace in order to extirpate the virus of opposition. Despite this, the Opposition was not annihilated. In the course of the preparation of the Congress, it won 30 votes against 140 in Berlin-Brandenburg, 9 against 232 at Halle, 15 against 100 at Magdeburg, 7 against 150 at Wasserkannte, 5 against 110 in the Ruhr and 7 against 56 in Baden. To be sure, the Opposition lost its bastion in Neukolln, where it had 37 votes against 115, but only following gerrymandering and changes in constituency boundaries. It held control of several local organisations still, Senftenberg, Rathenow, Schneidermuhl, in the Berlin-Brandenburg district, and especially Suhl in Thuringia (31). The historian of the Leninbund, R. Zimmerman, records 1,300 exclusions in the year 1927 of Party officials attached to the Opposition. He mentions numerous public meetings which ended in real fighting, with the party trying to break them up and the Oppositionists organising the defence of their meetings (32). An attentive examination, in fact, permits us not merely to deny categorically the appreciation of Michel

Prat according to which the end of 1926 saw a "collapse" of the Left Opposition, but on the contrary demonstrates the exceptional vitality of a tendency which still retained the leadership of local groups of the K.P.D. after a year of witch-hunts and physical violence.

However, we observe the beginning of a move by the Opposition tending to organise independently - perhaps precisely because of the dual impact of the repression and this resistance. In the language used in the polemics of the time, this was a tendency to form, at least in fact, a "second party". Mitteilungsblatt did not remain a bi-monthly sheet. It became Die Fahne des Kommunismus (The Banner of Communism), presenting itself boldly as the organ of "the orthodox Marxist-Leninists". Above all, at the time of the municipal elections in September 1927, there was to be seen for the first time a list of left communists, which openly was presented against the list of the K.P.D. In fact, in Altona the local Communist organisation invited Urbahns to address its members, refused to exclude its officials and demonstrated its solidarity with Hubert Hoffmann, a leader who had been excluded. The Opposition hoped to concretise this resistance by way of a positive election result. At the outset the operation was planned for Hamburg and Altona. No warning was drawn from the failure at Hamburg; in the great port, where Urbahns, who five years earlier had led the armed insurrection of the Communist militants, was a dominant figure, those who drew up the list of "left communists" did not succeed in getting the 3,000 signatures required to present and support it. At Altona, the results were perhaps still more catastrophic, because they could be directly measured. The K.P.D. got 19,000 votes, but the list of the "left Communists" got a total of only 365, one vote for every fifty-two cast for the K.P.D., a proportion which came as a complete surprise to the leaders of the Opposition and a sharp warning, the meaning of which they were not to understand.

It is only through Trotsky's correspondence in exile, which Michel Prat has too superficially regarded, that we can form an idea of the reasons for this policy, which is a surprising one from several points of view. In fact we find running through Trotsky's letters in exile a certain number of warnings about the policies which the exiled Zinovievist militants, who regarded themselves as emissaries, were advocating to the German Lefts. Just as in Russia, the Zinovievists often took considerable risks with their policies during their period of activity, risking exclusion or punishment, it seems that a fraction, if not the majority of them, exerted pressure in a direction which led in fact to the creation in Germany, on the basis of the Opposition and its positions, of a real "second party", and that it was indeed this tendency which expressed itself through the candidatures of the Left Communists in the Altona municipal elections on September 27, 1927. We know that Solntsev fought against this policy.

We also know - though without so much detail - that contacts were made by other "Russian Trotskyists" with the remains of the Wedding Opposition, Hans Weber and a militant whose mother was Russian, Alexander (Sasha) Muller. We know that when the "Leningrader" G. I. Safarov, a diplomat from Turkey, arrived in mid-November, he undertook a criticism of Solntsev, whose organising activity he regarded as insufficient. At this moment he began to work with Maslov on drafting programmatic theses for a new International - which places him nearer to Korsch than to Trotsky. Safarov was not an isolated case. Kamenev supported the schemes for candidatures by members of the Leninbund in the legislative elections when he was passing through Berlin (34).

We lack information about the conference which was held in Berlin at the same time as the XVth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, so much so that good writers, using good arguments over a long period, have doubted the reality of an event which seemed to have survived only in the by no means completely reliable memory of Ruth Fischer. But Trotsky's correspondence, which mentions it several times, ^{finally} confirms the version given in Stalin and German Communism on this point. The conference was prepared by several journeys. Grylewicz went to Prague and was received by the party leaders, Viktor Stern and A Zapotocky, in the secretariat, and gave them information which the E.C. of the C.I. had not communicated to them (35). Likewise Ruth Fischer was received in Paris by two members of the secretariat, Paul Marion and Dallet (36). But contact was also made on this occasion with the opposition which claimed to be "left", the Treint - Suzanne Girault group in France and the Michalec-Neurath group in Czechoslovakia (37). Finally, we know that several European groupings of the Opposition were represented at the Berlin conference (38), in which some twenty Russians took part, militants of the Opposition, including Solntsev and Safarov. The latter seems to have made a powerful contribution on the basis of a policy which could be summed up, as Trotsky put it, in the formula, "it is five minutes to midnight", an appeal for all-out struggle involving an immediate split on the international scale (39). We do not know whether the Wedding people were represented, but only that two of their members from the Palatinate, Frenzel and Baumgartner, had conferred with Rakovsky when he was on his way through Germany after having been recalled from France (40). Did Safarov change his line abruptly in the middle of a speech when he received a telegram from Moscow announcing the decision of Zinoviev to capitulate, as Ruth Fischer says, or did he change like the others when he arrived in Moscow? We do not know. What is certain is that nothing more was heard of the draft theses for the new International by Maslov and Safarov (41) and that the German Opposition took a road leading less openly to a definite split when it decided to announce itself as a "public fraction" under the name of Leninbund.

We now have all the materials to enable us to analyse the reasons for the hostile-

ity of Trotsky and his fraction to this scheme. On January 14, Trotsky wrote to Perevertsev (42) that it was necessary, after the Altona experience, to give up completely the presentation of candidates, ^{which meant,} "to abandon our line in favour of problematic seats". He explained that the idea of forming a League (Bund) appeared to him to be mistaken: "The name of the Opposition is popular enough and it has an international character. The title "League" adds nothing, but it can become the pseudonym of a new party". He was to return to this question in a letter addressed to the Leninbund Congress attributed in Fahne des Kommunismus to "A Russian Communist". He pointed out that there existed in Germany neither mass pressure nor movements to the left, as the Altona results showed, and stressed that the proletarian core of the K.P.D. remained attached to that party by its desire to defend the USSR and its real suspicion of an "opposition", which was all the less convincing because it could not do anything. He believed that the German Opposition should begin by turning its attention to German questions, which would create the conditions in which it could become a mass movement with the confirmation of its analysis by developments in the USSR. He besought the leaders of the German Opposition to give up their electoral proposals. "Our own candidatures mean: 'The K.P.D. is no longer Communist. Down with the K.P.D.!'. This step would mean that the split had taken place and would make it impossible to win over the party. This would be suicidal". His proposals were simple: "The comrades who have been excluded remain a propaganda group with their weekly journal and influence the party from outside... The oppositionists struggle by all possible means... they submit to decisions but fight stubbornly for their convictions." (43).

It was, doubtless, Solntsev's successor in Germany - whom we know only under the initial "L" - who carried this line. Solntsev for his part thought that it was bad because of the results to which it led, which consisted of inducing the Germans not to organise. He was to write on this theme to Trotsky:

"I believe the position which you have taken on the subject of the organisational measures of the Germans to be absolutely mistaken.... I have seen that these formations melted away because they were not organised. Nor will the fraction gain anything either by neglecting questions of organisation." (44)

In fact Trotsky's advice was not heeded. Paradoxically, the encouragement which the Zinovievists had given during the preceding year to the Left revealed itself to be decisive just at the moment when those who inspired it, for all that, capitulated unconditionally in the USSR. On March 4, 1928, was held the conference which was to launch the slogan of organising the Leninbund with an appeal to the German workers:

"We do not have a new programme! We are not founding a new party! What we want is that all the Communists who take their stand on the position of Lenin

who recognise the decisions of the five first congresses of the Communist International, in order to re-unify the ranks of all the authentic Communists in the struggle against opportunism and revisionism in all its forms".(45)

The constitution laid down:

"The Leninbund is the organisational rally-point of all Communists, whether within or outside the K.P.D., who struggle against Stalinism for the re-unification on the basis of Leninist foundations of all the Communists in Germany and in the Communist International".(46)

The Leninbund: A Public Fraction or a Second Party?

The Leninbund, which was to be formally constituted in Berlin on April 8 and 9, 1928, in the Landtag building, by a conference which brought together 153 delegates and three Russians, supported by about a hundred visitors, was beyond all possible doubt a revolutionary workers' organisation, a legitimate offspring of Spartakus, of the Left of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) and of the "United Communist Party of Germany", (V.K.P.D.), the name adopted by the K.P.D. following its fusion in December 1920 with the left of the USPD at the Halle Congress up to the Jena Congress in August 1921. The statistics which the organisers gave about 150 of the 153 delegates are significant on this point (47).

To begin with, it was a young organisation, of people who had lived through the class battles since 1917. 37.4% of the delegates were under 30 years of age, and 60% were under 35 years of age. In 1917, at the time of the October Revolution, 60% of them had been under 25 years of age, and 37.4% under 20 years of age. That made it an organisation markedly younger not only than the S.P.D. but also than the K.P.D.

As regards their political origins, it was ascertained that 50% of the delegates had belonged to a political organisation before the November revolution and 43% before the first World War. 17% of them had come to the Communist movement during the year of revolutionary struggle of 1918 - 19, and the remainder, 21%, had come through the unemployment, the inflation and the revolutionary crisis in 1923. 74 delegates had been members of the Social-Democratic Party and 78 of the USPD. 19 had belonged to the Spartakusbund, 2 to the Austrian Social-Democratic Party and 1 to the Bund. 149 of the 150 had belonged at one time or another to the K.P.D. 101 (67.3%) had been excluded, 17 (11.3%) had left of their own accord and 31 (20.7%) were still members.

The social composition of the delegates was no less significant. 127 of them, 84.7%, were industrial workers, 8 of them, 5.3%, were employed in commerce and 15, 10%, practised un-waged professions.

We have less documentation about the membership of the organisation, which was

probably nearer to the figure of 2,000 which it had in 1929 than to the 11,000 to which the Opposition was believed to amount in 1927. Its principal strong points were in Berlin, where it had members in every district, in the region of Dortmund, especially in Mannheim, Bruchsal, Karlsruhe, in the Wasserkante, where Urbahns had leadership, in Cologne, Aix-la-Chapelle, Suhl in Thuringia, Halle, Magdeburg, Zeitz, in the Palatinate, etc. At the founding conference, Scholem declared in his report that the Leninbund organisation influenced some 80,000 to 100,000 Communist workers inside and outside the Party. The figure is no doubt exaggerated, though the fact that the Leninbund possessed a daily paper, the Suhl Volkswille, since the beginning of 1928, enables us to imagine that it enjoyed an influence which would definitely be many times that of its membership strictly speaking.

However, the question was that of the fundamental orientation of this group. In fact, Urbahns proposed, and the Leninbund Congress decided, to participate in the Reichstag elections, in order to try to retain some of the seats which it had kept after their holders had been excluded from the K.P.D. Trotsky's fears were realised. In opposition to everything that was said in their manifesto and to the sense of their constitution, and despite a vigorous speech by Heinz Lagerhaus, (a "Ruthenian"), the delegates voted, with only 26 votes against, to participate in the elections. The Communist International caught the ball on the bounce, and in a declaration published on May 8, 1928, it promised to re-admit within six months any militant who immediately left the Leninbund and undertook to withdraw from its election lists (48). The following day Maslov and Ruth Fischer, with three of their comrades, declared that the resolution of the Communist International "reflected the state of mind of wide layers of Communist workers in favour of the unification of all the Communists, and stressed the necessity for the Communists to support the "turn to the left" in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the question of the grain collections (49). This was an ambiguous position. In it were expressed both the pre-occupations of Solntsev and, no doubt, the pressure of Zinoviev and Kamenev to bring back their German comrades to their line, which took them through capitulation. In his turn, some days later, Werner Scholem joined Max Hesse and resigned, calling for votes for the K.P.D. candidates.(50) He considered the decision a violation of the very bases of the Leninbund and a blow against the revolutionary workers in the K.P.D. as well as the beginning of the decomposition of the Leninbund, won by "the spirit of a sect". He declared: "Every Oppositional comrade who wishes to defend Communist principles must struggle today for re-unification in the Communist International, as our Russian comrades also are doing, even when they are banished from it".

In fact the Leninbund entered a serious crisis. The object of the E.C.C.I. was to provoke a number of its members to break from what it called "the counter-

revolutionary Fischer-Maslov-Urbahns group" - the pseudonym for the Leninbund in the Moscow documents. And it was Maslov and Fischer who were the first to hold out their hands the take advantage of the forgiveness offered to those who would repudiate them! Confusion reached its height. Had Trotsky himself believed for an instant that Maslov and Fischer would break with the Leninbund for reasons analogous to the criticisms which he had made at its foundation, when they were really taking the road of Zinoviev and Kamenev, with whom they had re-established contact, with some delay and without saying anything (51)? A report from Scholem (52) addressed to the leadership several days before he resigned (52) stresses to other grave aspects of the crisis, namely the dramatic financial situation of an organisation loaded with debt, which supports a daily paper as best it can and grows poorer every day, and the total disappearance of practically every link with the K.P.D. and the profound political developments within it. The most dramatic illustration of these statements came in May; following the initiative of the local leader Guido Heym, who wanted to save "his journal", the Leninbund group at Suhl went over... to the Social-Democratic Party. The national leadership of the Leninbund none the less succeeded in reviving a Volkswille in a small format which appeared three times a week from May 18 onwards - two days before the Reichstag elections (54).

The elections produced the catastrophe which could have been foreseen. The oppositional lists got 80,230 votes in ^{the} 24 (out of 35) constituencies in which they were presented. This was 0.26% of the total votes cast. The K.P.D. got 3,262,986 votes, 10.5% of those cast (55). The Leninbund had no longer anyone elected at the national level. Pravda exulted at the blow which, in its words, the German working class had inflicted on "the Trotskyists". From Alma Ata Trotsky wrote to his comrades:

"The 80,000 votes are certainly not those of comrades who share our ideas. They are obviously those of supporters of the ultra-left wing of the Leninbund and of the ultra-left in general (Korsch and others). Our comrades called for votes for the official candidates of the Party, and they were right to do so. But the stupidity of the bureaucrats is the only explanation of the fact that Pravda contemptuously shrugs its shoulders at the 80,000 votes which the ultra-lefts have won (which the falsifiers call 'Trotskyist', without any reason for doing so). 80,000 is a very important figure, if we do not forget that only selected individuals, and not the masses, could vote for such purely demonstrative candidates." (56)

Less than a month earlier, Trotsky had clearly expressed his position towards the Leninbund, in a letter to a party comrade who belonged to the fraction of the conciliators:

"To speak of an organisational bloc is absolutely false. All the statements

to this effect are fabrications. But undoubtedly there does exist an ideological and political affinity, as far as I can judge on the basis of the publications of the group which I receive. I think that it has abandoned much and learned much. To accuse it of being counter-revolutionary or of having reneged, etc. is absolutely false and differs in no respect from accusing the Opposition of 'supporting' Chamberlain."(57)

Michel Prat has read this letter, which he believed he can sum up by saying that Trotsky "defends himself against the accusation of an 'organisational bloc' with Fischer and Maslov, but that he admits the existence of 'an ideological and political affinity' (58)". This seems unfair to me. What is of interest to us is that nothing subsequently shows that Trotsky really revised what was a favourable prejudice, provided we remember his hostility to the "left-ist" adventures of the German group. But was Alma Ata any more favourable than Moscow to an attentive examination of the policy of the Leninbund?

In reality their differences were deepening, at least on the sensitive question of the USSR. Die Fahne des Kommunismus saw in the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, which announced a new zigzag to the left, that of the "third period" and of the elimination of the right-ists... the "victory of Bukharinist revisionism", the proof of the victory in the USSR of the Bukharin-Rykov bloc which had taken Stalin captive (59)... It took the Leninbund's press months to extricate itself, and then badly, from the imbroglio into which this magistral piece of nonsense plunged it.

There are many gaps in our knowledge of this period. We do not know how far the contacts with the Russian Opposition went, how frequent or how close they were. There is nothing which enables us to think of a permanent interchange, such as existed in Solntsev's time. He addressed to Trotsky the last report from abroad which we possess from him, while he was passing through Berlin in November 1928. In it he sharply criticised the comrades who had undertaken to replace him. According to him, their mistake is that "we have principally oriented ourselves towards Weber (that is, towards the Wedding Opposition), which, for the moment, represents strictly nothing. We have completely turned our backs on Urbahns. No one has been to see him and no one has given him any documents. We sent Weber to see him, and he posed an ultimatum to him, etc."

Solntsev tried to regain the ground in relation to Urbahns which has been lost. He made efforts to improve the situation by giving explanations which he hopes Urbahns will accept on the basis of "their old friendship". He gave Trotsky a description of the Leninbund and of the attitude of Urbahns which rings very true:

"His organisation has 2,000 members and about as many sympathisers. It is not very solid politically and it makes mistakes. It intervened in the

campaign against the pocket-battleship (it played a certain double game with the right), but above all else it has no perspectives. It is waiting for us to give it some. It is trying to play at being independent of us, but fundamentally it listens to us and will continue to listen to us".(60)

Solntsev concluded by saying that the scheme for an international conference seemed to him to be premature, but that Urbahns intended to convene it for December 1928 and that he had refrained from opposing him. The conference was held on February 17, 1929, at Aix-la-Chapelle. It was convened by the Leninbund. Delegates from two German organisations took part in it, the Deutsche Industrieverband and the Korschist group Kommunistische Politik, from the Ruhr, as well as those from the French group Contre le Courant, from the Opposition in the Belgian Communist Party, from the N.A.S. trade union in the Netherlands and from the editors of the journal De Nieuwe Weg. Did the conference have the aim, as Rudiger Zimmerman thinks, of "clarifying" the Russian question in the different organisations of the left and extreme left which it claimed to re-group? In any case its composition well explains Solntsev's reserve and the absolute silence of Trotsky on the subject after he left the USSR. We ignore practically everything, except two decisions. One was to set up a provisional international committee, under the presidency of Urbahns and including the Belgian Van Overstraeten, the Frenchman Maurice Paz, the Dutchman Sneevliet, the Leninbund member Jakob Ritter and the syndicalist Paul Weyer. The other decision was to set up a "Trotsky Aid", which set itself the object of finding asylum for the exiled leader in Western Europe and of helping the Russian revolutionaries of the Opposition in prison or deportation (61).

* * *

When Trotsky arrived in exile, the Leninbund was one of the rare organisations possessing a certain reality about which one could think that it shared the essential viewpoints of and would form a support for organising the international Left Opposition. Well - one year was enough to produce a complete break, which could be forecast after several months of correspondence between Urbahns and the exile. This break, which lies outside the framework of this article, arose from divergences on the questions of the nature of the USSR, of the "second party" and the national or international dimension of the Opposition. It was the article by the Korschist sympathiser, Heinz Pachter, in the press of the Leninbund, which led to the outbreak of the conflict about "the defence of the USSR", in connection with the Chinese Eastern Railway (62). It was the appreciation of the nature of the USSR, made by the Central Committee of the Leninbund, which constituted the signal for the final break.

However, in the interval there were two incidents which illuminated the reality of the divergences between the two formations. On the morrow of the declaration

of August 1929, the Urbahns organisation, which proclaimed from the housetops that Rakovsky had capitulated, took upon itself the enormous responsibility of informing the world that there were no more than nuances between the capitulation of someone like Piatakov or Radek, who got back their jobs and their privileges and that of someone who was deported in the heart of Siberia (63). Moreover it admitted publicly that it had used for its own politics money that had been collected to help Russians who had been deported, thereby demonstrating a cynicism which, in its own way, bore witness to the degree of decomposition in the German Communist movement after years of "Ruthenian Bolshevisation" and of Stalinisation.

We hope to have convinced our readers that the concrete history of this period of communist oppositions is far from being explained merely, as Michel Prat thinks, by "the vision of the relations between the crisis of the Russian Communist Party and the crisis of the Communist International" (64). There are equally social forces, classes layers, apparatuses, large and small interests, a bureaucracy on the scale of an empire and a mini bureaucracy on the scale of a sect, the difficulties of a concrete orientation in an entirely new concrete situation, without positive or negative references to a past experience. We shall know more, and understand more, when we have a deeper understanding of what the Zinovievist current was and what its politics were, and when we have analysed, for all the sections of the Communist International, the significance of what some people called "national-oppositionism". There are all these elements and many more which intervene to explain a development which is more complex and contradictory than the excessively summary and sometimes schematic explanation of Michel Prat could suggest. On the other hand, we await with immense interest the work which he is preparing on Korsch.

We would like to conclude on the German Left, within, of course, the limits of our knowledge. There can be no doubt that the existence of this current, with its characteristics and its deep roots - an authentic "workers' leftism" - in Germany which was one of the principal obstacles in the road of the international Left Opposition and especially of the German Opposition. That is only one of the ways of showing that the Zinovievist current, which was at one and the same time near and different, constituted at one and the same time a rival and a handicap to the Trotskyist current.

However, it would not be serious to claim today to maintain an equal balance between them, in some kind of historical balance-sheet. The appalling capitulation of Zinoviev, Kamenev and their Russian comrades can, of course, be put down to the weakness of character of these men and to the brutality and cruelty of the Stalinist torturers. But in the two cases this explanation is really not enough. Politically Zinoviev could not hold out - as he tried - on a position

independent of the bureaucracy which was not that of Trotsky - or a position independent of that of Trotsky which was not identical with that of the bureaucracy, even "amended". The political odyssey of his German followers is a clear illustration of this. It demonstrates, in fact, that, when Zinoviev and Kamenev received the bullets which finished them off in the cellars of the Lubyanka, both men were really bankrupt and totally isolated politically.

Urbahns' Leninbund - that is the most suitable label for it - or what remained of it, cannot be seriously considered as the continuation of the German Communist Left. It entered on a divergence which took it a very long way, and no longer really has its place in the history of ideas. The other leaders of the German Left dispersed to different positions, between which it is, none the less, possible to detect a certain unity. Anton Grylewicz, the militant worker who symbolised the Left, the man who ensured continuity with the struggle of the social-democratic "revolutionary delegates" in the Berlin munitions factories during the war, selected to organise the German October in 1923, placed himself in 1929 at the head of the minority in the Leninbund and carried on the struggle for a German section of the Left Opposition and then of the Fourth International. We say today - thanks to the Oeuvres - that the last stage of the itinerary as Communists of Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslov likewise unfolded in the embattled camp of Trotsky, whom they met in Paris in January 1934. Won to work with them by Trotsky and Sedov, they could never overcome the hostility of the "real Trotskyists" who came out of the German Opposition. From 1934 to 1936 they worked for the International Secretariat of the International Communist League, of which Fischer was a member under the name Dubois, while Maslov collaborated with it under that of Parabellum. This is not the place to discuss the circumstances and reasons of their break, which took place some time in 1936. Let us say merely that it too constituted only a stage in a long drift outside the history of Communism. Their names were associated for the last time with that of Trotsky by the prosecutor, Vyshinsky, in the third Moscow Trial.

The itinerary of Werner Scholem, one of the most attractive of this group of young post-war leaders, is beginning to be known. He refused, like Max Hesse, another veteran of the insurrection prepared in Moscow in 1923 - to support the line which led Fischer and Maslov to capitulate, and resigned in February 1928 from the Leninbund, advancing reasons which could have come from Trotsky. As an attentive observer, during a momentary tactical diversion, while he resumed his advanced legal studies to qualify as a lawyer in Berlin, he was attracted by Trotsky's analyses. In 1931 in Berlin he made the acquaintance of Leon Sedov, and this meeting marked the beginning of a regular collaboration with Trotsky's German comrades, weekly meetings with E. Bauer and drafting (un- signed) articles for Die Permanente Revolution. He expressed the desire to meet Trotsky, who, for his part, keenly wished to win a man of his quality and his talents. But

in the end it was Trotsky who opposed his proposal to travel, not wanting someone like Scholem to run the risk of finding himself in Turkey at the moment of the decisive struggle on German soil. Scholem first emigrated to Czechoslovakia and then returned with underground links to the Left Opposition, and was arrested. The Nazis were not going to let this prey escape, a Communist, and intellectual and a Jew. He was savagely tortured and, it appears, was executed or struck down in 1939. It is curious that the Trotskyist current has not laid claim with greater enthusiasm to this martyr, who none the less did belong to it. Winning him to their ranks, as well as his heroic end, do them credit. The final adherence of this young German leader, who had organised the campaign of signatures for the "letter of the 700", when he joined the international organisation founded by Trotsky, was not just an episode. It demonstrates that it is ridiculous to try to counter-pose the course of the Russian Opposition to that of the German Opposition or vice versa. We have tried here to introduce a little clarity into episodes which invite us not to seek scapegoats for errors of tactics so much as to pose seriously and with respect for the subject the problems which arose from what the Russian Opposition very correctly at the time called "the crisis of the revolution".

F O O T N O T E S

- (1) Michel Prat, "Crise du P.C.Russe et crise du Komintern. La question d'une opposition de gauche internationale (1926 - 1927) Pensiero e azione politica de Lev Trockij, pp. 347 - 358.
- (2) Ibidem, p. 348.
- (3) Ibidem, p. 357 - 358.
- (4) Quoted by Rudiger Zimmerman, Der Leninbund, p. 60
- (5) Made public on September 11, published in Vorwaerts, September 13, 1926 and then in Die Aktion No. 9 at the end of September.
- (6) Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism, p. 567.
- (7) Ibidem, pp. 544 - 548.
- (8) Die Rote Fahne, August 19, 1926
- (9) Die Rote Fahne, August 20, 1926
- (10) Vorwaerts, September 13, 1926: the document is often called "The Letter of the 700".
- (11) M. Prat, loc. cit., p. 353.
- (12) Pravda, October 12, 1926; the text was published in Germany in Die Rote Fahne, October 19, 1926.
- (13) Die Rote Fahne, October 22, 1926.
- (14) K. Korsch, "Der Kampf der Linken un die Komintern", "Kommunistische Politik", No. 1, 18, mid-October 1926, quoted by M. Prat, loc. cit p. 354, No. 31.
- (15) Vorwaerts, October 17, 1926.
- (16) Ibidem.
- (17) Die Rote Fahne, November 7 and 9, 1926.
- (18) Ruth Fischer, op. cit., p. 571.
- (19) Inprecorr, January 20, 1927, pp. 177ff.
- (20) M. Prat, loc cit, p. 354.
- (21) Ibidem.
- (22) Die Rote Fahne and Vorwaerts, December 7, 1926.
- (23) The journal was to appear on January 1, 1927.
- (24) M. Prat, loc cit, p. 354.
- (25) Ibidem, p. 357, No. 43.
- (26) Trotsky's letter of April 2, 1927, in "The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926 - 27)", pp. 215 - 219.

- (27) Ruth Fischer, op. cit., p.587.
- (28) Ibidem, pp. 585 - 586.
- (29) Ibidem, p. 587.
- (30) All this information is to be found in Trotsky's correspondence at Harvard, and, especially, two letters from Solntsev.
- (31) Zimmermann, op. cit., p. 48.
- (32) Ibidem, p. 49.
- (33) Ibidem, p. 59.
- (34) Trotsky to Judin, May 26, 1928, Houghton bMS. Rus 13, T 1530.
- (35) Zimmerman, op. cit., p. 60.
- (36) Bulletin Communiste, No. 9, 1928.
- (37) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 29, September 30, 1927.
- (38) Ruth Fischer, op. cit., pp. 587ff. A note by Shachtman in his archives mentions the presence at this conference of Safarov, Perevertsev, Kaplinsky, Ivanov, Kanatchikov, Hertzberg and Moise Lurie, whose presence provoked protest from the Germans, and who was to figure in the first Moscow Trial.
- (39) Letter to Judin.
- (40) Solntsev to Trotsky, May 11, 1928, Houghton, T. 1228.
- (41) Letter to Judin.
- (42) These are the well-known "two letters to Peter", published in Pravda on January 15, 1928, and then in the world Communist press, which M. Prat, who quotes "Zwie Dokumente" which appeared in Inprekorr, No. 4, p. 347, does not seem to have identified. "Pierre" was in fact N.N. Perevertsev, who was an international railway official, the co-ordinator, with Solntsev, of the Left Opposition abroad, and who, after being deported, maintained his contact before being arrested and disappearing in 1933.
- (43) The letter was entitled, "Letter from a Russian Comrade", in Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 15, April 13, 1928. It is Solntsev who identifies Trotsky as the author of the letter and who writes to present his reservations about the proposed line.
- (44) Solntsev to Trotsky, loc. cit.
- (45) Die Aufgaben der linken Kommunisten, p.5.
- (46) Ibidem, p. 36.
- (47) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, May 15, 1928.
- (48) Die Rote Fahne, May 10 and 15, 1928.
- (49) The date of the document of Maslov and Ruth Fiascher, is May 9, 1928.

- (50) The date of the document of Scholem and Max Hesse is May 7.
- (51) Trotsky's letter is dated June 2, 1928, Houghton T 1613.
- (52) On Scholem's report, see Zimmermann, op. cit., p. 60.
- (53) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, May 7, 1928.
- (54) Zimmermann, op. cit., pp. 80 - 81.
- (55) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, April 16, 1928.
- (56) Trotsky's letter is dated June 2, 1928.
- (57) Trotsky's letter is dated July 2, 1928.
- (58) M. Prat, loc. cit., p. 356, No. 41.
- (59) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, August 3, 1928.
- (60) Letter of Solntsev to Trotsky, October 1928, Houghton T 2870.
- (61) There are only a few lines reporting this Aix-la-Chapelle conference of February 17, 1929, in Volkswille of February 27, 1929: the Leninbund had appeared there, not only as the power which issued the invitations but as the principal force of the "Left Communists".
- (62) Heinz Pachter (1907 - 1982), made only a short trip into Korschist country. He later became a Brandler-ite and thereafter evolved towards the right. Particularly he wrote about Spain, under the pseudonym of Henri Rabasseire, and then in USA under the name of Henry Pachter. His initials, H.P., are often written as G.P. in the passages in which Trotsky refers to his article, as a result of the double transliteration into Russian and out again.
- (63) It should be noted that one of the grounds on which Trotsky reproached Urbahns was that, even after the "three" had capitulated in the USSR, the Leninbund press continued to publish articles by them as if they were contributions to a free discussion. Between mid-July and mid-October, we find these articles in eleven out of the twelve issues of Die Fahne des Kommunismus, the majority of which were by Radek, whom his former comrades regarded as a traitor (informer). Trotsky wrote in anger about the hypocrisy of putting up a show of maintaining a balance - any way an unequal one - between Oppositionists and neo-Stalinists.
- (64) This article was completed when there appeared in Communiste, No. 5, 1984, entitled "The International Communist Movement and the Oppositions". Let us refer here merely to a few points related to our field of study, and, first of all, to page 30 and the statement that the declaration of October 16, 1926, was "the capitulation of the United Opposition". Is the intention just to write no matter what? How does Dreyfus explain that the people who "capitulated" went on fighting for more than a year together before being defeated, and some held out to the point of death? Or is he ignorant of the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1927, and has he not read "La Revolution Défigurée"? Has he really no other source than the article by M. Prat, who, with greater seriousness, clearly does not speak of "capitulation" in this context. The declaration of October 16 was a retreat, a step back, a manoeuvre, whatever you like, but a "capitulation". Otherwise words have no meanings any more. If this declaration is a capitulation, then saying that

you will defend your ideas always, but on the basis of literal respect for the constitution - is "capitulation". But what did Zinoviev and Kamenev do what they declared that they were giving up their ideas? If you go round denouncing capitulation everywhere, you end up by not seeing it where it is. By trying to prove too much, you make yourself ridiculous. Michel Dreyfus's "effort" at analysing the line of the Russian Opposition reminds us irresistibly of that of Stalin, for whom the Opposition was "dead" in 1927, was "in its death agony" in 1928, was "receiving decisive blows" in 1929, and of which the "last remains" were being crushed in 1930 - which did not prevent it from "raising its head" in 1931, and so on. The difference is that we know why Stalin acted like that, but we do not know what Michel Dreyfus's motivations are... even if he can tell us. For no doubt they are the same as inspire him to put quotation marks round "Left Opposition" - that was its name - but not round "Communist Party", nor to write either of people being banished or exiled, nor even, as is usual, being deported, but being "deported" in quotation marks. These are options which, while they appear to be technical matters, cannot help expressing a political choice. Such a choice may hide itself for a moment, or may take the form of this bewildering "negligence", every time there is any question about Trotsky or his comrades-in-arms.

P.S. This note was already drafted when a letter came to us at the office of the Leon Trotsky Institute from Michel Dreyfus, dated February 6, 1985, asking the Institute to take note of his resignation from the Leon Trotsky Institute in the following terms: "Michel Dreyfus informs us that he resigns from the Leon Trotsky Institute". It seems to us that it would have been logical for this resignation to have reached us before his article, and not after we protested to "Communisme". None the less it forms an element of clarification in which we can take satisfaction - and it permits us to thank Michel Dreyfus unreservedly for what he has done during several years for the Institute in the period when we were in agreement on the fundamental principles of historical work (P.B.).