

Chapter Ten. The Struggle of the Unified Opposition

The battle at the Fourteenth Congress was to be no more than a preface to the more important battle which was joined within the party. The party had just decided, unanimously, to change the name of the party for the second time, and to become "the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the USSR". It was to witness the rise of the coalition of the two oppositions, that of 1923 and that of 1925, and the gathering together of what could appear as the elite of the party and of the Old Guard against the leadership in the hands of the General Secretary. Perhaps, as the majority of the historians think, the alliance of Trotsky with Zinoviev and Kamenev was inevitable, after first one and then the others had seen their efforts broken against the dominating power of the apparatus. However, this was less evident to the actors in the drama. In fact, it was from Zinoviev and Kamenev, whom moreover he regarded as his principal adversaries, that Trotsky had received the most serious blows, and he did not have them to thank for his isolation being only relative, since he continued to be a member of the Politburo. It was partly thanks to Trotsky's attacks and revelations that Kamenev and especially Zinoviev had lost the prestige which presented them as the lieutenants and, later, as the successors of Lenin, in the front rank of the troika.

It seems likely that neither of the contending fractions at the Fourteenth Congress ignored the important factor which the intervention of Trotsky might be in the conflict in which his conquerors were tearing each other apart. Zinoviev had revealed Stalin's underhand attacks on him. Stalin had revealed that he had refused to exclude him from the party, as the other triumvirs had demanded. Mikoyan had contrasted Trotsky's disciplined attitude to the attitude of the Leningraders, and Tomsy had contrasted the clarity of his position to their subterfuges. Yaroslavsky and Kalinin had reproached them for the methods they had used against him. Krupskaya had paid homage to him at length, while Lashevich had admitted that he had been right on many of the points in the 1923 discussion. However, Trotsky had remained silent. He had intervened only twice and then briefly, once to support Zinoviev, who justified his hostile attitude the preceding year by declaring that they could not elect a man to the Politburo who was accused of so many mistakes, and the second time to protest when Stalin announced "reprisals" against the Leningrad organisation.

We may believe, with the majority of the historians, that this abstention from the fight in 1925 was the greatest tactical error of Trotsky's career. The fact is that this appreciation is easier for anyone who knows the history that followed. Trotsky's personal feeling was that there was nothing to choose between the protagonists on either side. On January 8, 1926, he wrote to Bukharin to remind him how he (Trotsky) had been treated as a "demagogue" in 1924 for having said - with a trace of exaggeration, as he recognised - that the Communist workers of Leningrad were literally "muzzled" by the apparatus. He observed that the same unanimity reigned today, in the opposite way, on the one hand in Leningrad and on the other hand in the other organisations in