

# The Tactics and Tasks of the Leninist Opposition

**Soviet Bolshevik-Leninists**  
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*This document is the ninth and last chapter of “The Crisis of the Revolution and the Tasks of the Proletariat”, a major programmatic document produced by leading Soviet Trotskyists imprisoned in the Verkhne-Uralsk Political Isolator in the summer of 1932. Large portions of the document were recovered in 2018 and published in 2022. It was likely co-authored by a number of figures, including Grigory Yakovín, Elizár Solntsev and Georgy Stopalov.*

*This concluding chapter outlines the tasks of the opposition in developing its work in the working class and draws a preliminary balance sheet of the work of the opposition over the preceding decade. In the previous chapters, the Trotskyists outlined the historical and political origins of Stalinism and the consequences of the program of “socialism in one country” for Soviet economic policy and the degeneration of the Communist International.*

*The WSWs is publishing this original translation of the chapter to accompany the lecture “The Stalinist bureaucracy launches a war on the Trotskyist movement”, delivered by Clara Weiss to the 2025 SEP US Summer School on Security and the Fourth International. Along with the other documents found in 2018, it irrefutably shows that despite the ever-more ferocious repression by the GPU, the Trotskyist opposition remained a fighting force in Soviet life, determined to develop its struggle in the working class. This translation includes extensive footnotes to facilitate the understanding of this document.*

## The Historical Role and Tasks of the Leninist Opposition in the International Labor Movement

1. The Leninist opposition is, first and foremost, an international tendency. Its emergence and development are rooted in the profound changes in the international situation that followed the defeat of the first wave of the European revolution in 1921–1923.

The so-called stabilization of capitalism brought with it a strengthening of the position of social reformism in the working class, a decline in the world communist movement, and a strengthening of right-centrist elements within its ranks. The Leninist left wing of the Comintern suffered a series of defeats until it was finally formally pushed outside the ranks of the C[ommunist] I[nternational].

The rout of the left wing of communism was the culmination of the shift that had taken place in world relations. However, this defeat did not lead to the liquidation of the Opposition movement.

The contradictions of the world economy steadily undermined “stabilization,” causing partial upsurges in the proletarian class struggle, on the wave of which the left wing regained strength and received new sources of vitality.

2. The contemporary epoch contains within itself the greatest

revolutionary opportunities. Hence the burning need for a world communist party. The conquest of the Comintern, its transformation into the main instrument of the world proletarian revolution—this is the main task of the international left communist opposition.

In its struggle to restore the VKP [All-Union Communist Party] and the CI [Communist International], the opposition of B[olshevik]-L[eninists] is oriented toward a profound reform of these organizations through the replacement of their opportunist leadership.

To this end, the opposition is creating the ideological and organizational base for the left-wing proletarian elements of the international communist movement.

Only the fulfillment of this task at the present stage prepares the possibility at the next stage of winning communist workers to the side of Leninist policy and of turning the Comintern into the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat on a higher basis.

## The main stages in the development of the Leninist opposition's tactics

*A) From October 1923 to the 14th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party*

1. The first stage of the opposition movement was a spontaneous reaction of the part[y] masses against the beginning of the party's bureaucratization, which was the main form of pressure of the first petty-bourgeois reaction.

The mistakes of the party leadership in economic policy, which had a sharp impact on the material situation of the working masses, and the failure of the Comintern's tactics in Germany caused open discontent within the party.

2. The tactics of the opposition during this period consisted in ideologically articulating this discontent and explaining the reasons for the mistakes of the leadership.

However, the opposition was unable to completely fulfill this role, since it (i.e., its leadership) did not yet fully realize that the division that had begun within the party would become the starting point for further internal party struggles, which would mean a deep division of the party along two class lines.

3. The Declaration of 46<sup>[1]</sup> and the “New Course”<sup>[2]</sup>—the main documents of the opposition at that time—reflected a certain lack of agreement, mainly in terms of the analysis of the Central Committee's economic policy and its social significance, as well as the political meaning of the inner-party differences.

This mistake by the opposition leadership was accompanied by another mistake, in organizational matters. The organizational immaturity of the opposition in 1923 was one of the reasons for its defeat in Moscow,

despite the fact that it had a clear majority in the ranks of the Moscow organization.

4. The objective reason for all these tactical mistakes was rooted in the underdevelopment of class contradictions in the country at that time, and hence in the lag of party consciousness behind the tasks posed by the course of events.

This also explains the fact of the almost complete elimination of the opposition movement by the eve of the 14th Congress.

#### *B) From the 14th to the 15th Congress*

1. By the time of the 14th Congress [in December 1925], the main class tendencies within the party were quite clear. A right-centrist bloc had formed, as had left-centrist elements who led the opposition movement of the Leningrad proletariat.

The main tactical task of the opposition of 1923 during this period was to form a bloc with the Leningrad opposition, while maintaining its ideological independence, and gradually gain hegemony within this bloc.

The opposition fully accomplished this task, as expressed in its main documents of that time: 1) the Declaration of 1926<sup>[3]</sup>, 2) the Declaration of the 83 [in May 1927]<sup>[4]</sup>, 3) the Platform of the 13.<sup>[5]</sup>

2. In the struggle against the right-centrist bloc, the united opposition went through three main stages in its tactics: 1) a period of preparatory underground work. This consisted of creating a faction and developing its ideology and organization, and then, on this basis, launching a decisive open offensive in the form of a “siege” of the “bastions of the apparatus” (Aviaprivor, the Putilov Factory, etc.).<sup>[6]</sup>

2. The lessons of the first period showed the inadequacy of this form of struggle, the enormous power of prejudice among the working masses themselves, and the need to transition to a new form of struggle, one that was more understandable to the party masses and designed for the slow, persistent, and systematic explanation of their views within the framework of open, legal speeches.

The defeat of October 16, 1926,<sup>[7]</sup> opened a period of retreat for the opposition, based on the curtailment of underground factional struggle and a shift of emphasis to legal work. The 15th Party Conference [in October-November 1926], the plenum of the ECCI [in November-December 1926], and the February [1927] plenum of the Central Committee were the stages of this new tactic. During this period, the D[emocratic] C[entrist] group broke away from the opposition, failing to understand the need for new forms of struggle, without which it was impossible to prepare the conditions for a new offensive.<sup>[8]</sup>

3. The tactics of retreat and open legal speeches proved entirely justified at this moment, when the renewed disagreements over the Chinese Revolution made an intensification of the struggle and a transition to the offensive inevitable. Thanks to its legal work, the opposition managed to gain strong political support from the party during this period.

The new offensive tactics in the period from April 1927 to the 15th Congress [in December 1927] combined legal and semi-legal methods of struggle, and thus unfolded at a higher level than the struggle of 1926. A broad petitioning campaign, meetings, demonstrations, along with the intensification of underground factional work, testified to the high level of struggle and a broad penetration of the masses.

#### *C) From the 15th Congress to the November Plenum of [19]28*

1. The capitulation of the left-centrist Zinovievists and the acute crisis of the right-centrist bloc on the basis of the kulak grain strike, which dealt a decisive blow to the illusions of the recovery period, created a new balance of forces in the country and the party.

The leftward shift in the centrists' policy was an expression of this new phase of development and presented the opposition with new tasks. “Centrism,” says Trotsky, assessing the prospects for the post-congress period, “is empirical, but the masses too are gaining their own experience in struggle. This is what we are counting on.” (“At a New Stage”).<sup>[10]</sup>

The revival of the working class and the strengthening of left-wing

elements in the party create favorable conditions for the opposition movement. The half-heartedness of centrism, its indecisiveness, and its vacillations, which manifested themselves so clearly at the April and July plenums of 1928, have increasingly exposed its inability to face new dangers.

2. Having proclaimed its main tactical task to be the support of the leftist steps of centrism in the form of criticism, with the aim of exposing the centrist leadership, the opposition, on this tactical basis, found a connection with the party masses, won the initiative in the struggle against the rightists, and went on the offensive.

The campaign [for new collective agreements] of 1928 was the high point of the opposition's offensive movement.<sup>[11]</sup> Under its powerful pressure, the centrists were forced to enter into a struggle with the right, but the opposition did not have enough strength to carry out a reform of the party and replace the centrist leadership.

#### *D) From November 1928 to the present period*

1. Despite the fact that the centrist leadership maintained all its strategic differences with the opposition and left the party regime and bureaucratic methods of economic construction untouched, it “adopted slogans from our arsenal” (Tr[otsky]).<sup>[12]</sup> Having embarked on a course of administrative struggle against the kulaks and the administrative establishment of collective farms and industrialization, it instilled in the working class and the party illusions, — which are by no means revolutionary —, about the possibility of a quick way out of the contradictions.

2. The radical change in the situation forced the opposition to change its tactics yet again, shifting its work onto the rails of persistently and systematically explaining to the masses that centrism is incapable of leading the working class and the proletarian dictatorship along new paths out of the quagmire into which it has driven the country with its policies.

This new tactic was expressed in the declaration dated October 4, 1929.<sup>[13]</sup>

The main tactical task of this period was to create a united front in relation to the masses, who were gripped illusions about the “five-year plan.” Analyzing the situation, the statement warned that the centrist five-year plan, carried out by methods rejected by the October Revolution, leads not to the development but to a reduction in productive forces, not to an improvement but to a deterioration in the material, political, and cultural situation of the working class.

3. The centrist leadership's transition to the path of an u[ltra]-l[eft] adventure and the subsequent first retreat on March 15 [1930] revealed the entirely baseless and adventuristic character of centrist politics. By this time, a new formation of left-centrists ([around] Lominad[ze]) had begun to break away from the leading faction [around Stalin].<sup>[14]</sup>

The capitulations stopped in the ranks of the opposition. All this signified the beginning of the decline of centrist illusions among the masses and allowed the opposition to begin preparing for a new offensive tactic, putting forward a new slogan of leadership change, which by this time could be concluded from the masses' own experience.

The *transition* to new tactics of attack was expressed in the declarations of the “Four”<sup>[15]</sup> and “Seven,”<sup>[16]</sup> which for the first time under the new conditions formulated the main differences, and in comrade Trotsky's August postcard, which gave the clearest formulation of the new tactics of attack and its main tasks.<sup>[17]</sup>

#### *E) The main lessons of our struggle*

Looking back on the stages of its struggle, the Leninist opposition must soberly reckon with the mistakes it has made in order to avoid repeating them in the future. We will note here only the most important of them.

From the very beginning of the struggle, the opposition did not realize the seriousness of the differences separating it from the ruling faction and the strength of the class influences that determine these differences.

This was linked to an underestimation of the importance of

organizational work, which resulted in the failure to take advantage of the most favorable conditions for creating a properly operating, illegal organization geared toward long-term underground work. The result of these mistakes is a discrepancy between the demands of political life and the available organizational capabilities, a discrepancy that has such a painful impact on mass work, which is far from corresponding to its potential ideological and political significance. Another equally serious shortcoming of our work consists in the concessions made to temporary fellow travelers in the struggle, often to a greater extent than was justified by the interests of the movement as a whole. As a result, by dividing our ranks and weakening our leadership, these elements (mainly of a left-centrist persuasion) undermined the ideological foundations and organizational strength of our movement at decisive moments and created deep internal crises within it. The influence of fellow travelers undoubtedly affected the tactical line of the opposition in a direction which, according to comrade Trotsky's assessment, consisted in the fact that "our mistakes have always been to a much greater extent mistakes to the right than to the left of the correct line" (see his letter of May 23, 1928, to Beloborodov).<sup>[18]</sup> Only after purging itself of the most harmful elements of left-centrism in the course of several experiences it had, did the Leninist opposition gain the opportunity to clearly orient its tactics toward an irreconcilable struggle against centrism.

### III. Our tasks in light of the foundations of Lenin's tactics

The main task of the opposition at the moment is to organize the proletarian struggle for the reform of the party, the unions, and the state on the basis of workers' democracy, as well as for the correction of the party's strategic line and its transfer back onto Lenin's rails.

This task can only be accomplished by mobilizing all the revolutionary forces of the party and the working class around the Leninist opposition.

The conditions that have developed up until now—the ever deepening economic and political crisis in the country—are causing growing discontent among all classes. In this situation, which undoubtedly broadens our base in the working class, although at the same time the danger of counterrevolutionary actions by hostile classes is growing, our tactical line must be expressed in a political offensive based on deep organizational work among the masses.

"The only way," says comrade Trotsky, "to preserve and increase the chances of the path of reform in the development of the October Revolution and the party is to create a properly functioning centralized organization of B[olshevik]-L[eninists], possessing sufficient technical means to systematically influence the public opinion of the scattered party" (letter dated August 8, [19]30).<sup>[19]</sup>

The main quality of the Leninist opposition must be the ability to make a sharp change in tactics, to rearm and apply new methods of struggle, in other words, to pursue a policy of sharp turns. In periods of political upsurge among the masses and the intensifying pressure of hostile classes, it must apply the tactics of a decisive and bold offensive. During periods of political decline in the mood of the masses, it must switch to defensive and wait-and-see tactics, striving even in these conditions to show the greatest activity in the struggle for influence over the masses on the basis of a new tactical line. While entering into forced compromises and agreements, it must never give an inch to an opponent or an unreliable ally on matters of principle.

A penetrating political analysis and sober assessments of reality have always helped the opposition to correctly map out its tactics, choosing between attack and defense depending on the objective situation. Therefore, it has always been alien to adventurism and has relied

exclusively on the growth of mass consciousness.

Only the advancement of seriously thought-through, concrete slogans for the moment, [based on] general programmatic guidelines and alien both to conservative caution and the simple uncritical repetition of previous slogans, can provide the opposition of B[olshevik]-L[eninists] with effective tactics corresponding to its goals.

### IV. The struggle for the masses

Since the October Revolution, there have been no changes in the position of our proletariat that would have led to the elimination of its former revolutionary role. On the contrary, during this time it has grown even more significantly in political and cultural terms.

Despite the profound decline in the political self-confidence of the working class, its passivity and fatigue in the years following the end of the civil war, and the susceptibility of some of its strata to the influence of petty-bourgeois prejudices originating in the countryside and deliberately instilled in it by the bureaucracy, we have repeatedly observed manifestations of deep resistance, if in a very muted form, by the working class to the Thermidorian course. This allows us to expect that now, as these harmful illusions among the masses are rapidly declining, any pressure from hostile classes may again create a new shift toward revolutionary activity in the party and the working class.

The current policy of the centrist bureaucracy is clearly designed to artificially divide the proletariat in order to deprive it of the possibility of self-defense. In this connection, a differentiation of the working masses into several strata, more or less clearly distinguished by their level of class consciousness, is becoming apparent. Alongside the small, highly paid labor aristocracy, which craves a quiet life, and the rather large, still unformed group of shock workers, who formally constitute the regime's support base, there is a vast cadre of "new recruits" from the petty bourgeoisie of the city and the countryside with a whole range of attitudes, ranging from trusting and good-natured acceptance of all the centrist fables presented to them, to a more conscious hatred of Soviet power and its contemporary representatives. But the bulk of the industrial proletariat is gradually being freed from its former illusions, gaining political experience and becoming imbued with a deep revolutionary discontent, while continuing to adopt a wait-and-see attitude, since the existing regime does not allow the mass mood to manifest itself openly until it reaches its peak, corresponding to the external tension of political activity. This basic core of the wor[king] class, capable of leading the rest of the multimillion-strong masses, is now looking for firm, clear leadership and a distinct program of action aimed at restoring a normal [Leninist] regime and a correct political line.

The main tactical questions of our struggle concern the *ways* of drawing into our ranks the advanced revolutionary elements of the party and the wor[king class] and, *through them*, subordinating the working class to our influence and leadership in the coming struggle for reform. In this matter, our first task is to counter all elements of disappointment, fatigue, and apathy that hinder the rise of revolutionary activity among the masses.

At the same time, [we] must not close our eyes to the fact that (despite the fact that the proletarian dictatorship contains the greatest latent sources of strength and revival) the broad masses of workers have not yet realized the need to actively oppose the growing counterrevolutionary danger, which is the fault of the centr[ist] leadership.

We know that victory cannot be achieved with the vanguard alone. In order for the entire class to arrive at direct and conscious support of the vanguard, it is necessary for it to acquire its own political experience and be able to generalize it.

Therefore, it should be easy for us to understand that the defense of the vital interests of the proletariat will only lead to the awakening of the backward strata of the masses when the goals of the struggle are closely linked to the concrete situation and are understandable to the broad masses. Only by creating a powerful, broad-based organization closely linked to the productive life of the masses and grown out of the defense of even the smallest everyday interests can we count on the success of our agitation and on the fact that these masses will follow us in the struggle for reform.

Focusing on the entire working class as a whole, we must work both among party members and among non-party workers, countering in every way attempts to create divisions between the two. Such attempts come both from the centrist bureaucracy, which seeks to sow discord between different sections of the working class, and from anti-Soviet parties, which try to turn non-party workers against the party and divert them onto the path of counterrevolution.

Our tactical orientation toward various political currents, and above all toward centrism itself, which represents the main danger within the party, therefore takes on particular significance. (L. Trotsky.)

Since the main aim of centrism is the mechanical suppression of proletarian activity, both by methods of administrative and economic terror and sophisticated methods of deception, our task is to carry out extensive explanatory work to expose centrism in order to raise proletarian activity to such a level that no intimidation can prevent the masses from taking action. At the same time, we must persistently explain to the masses that the path to reform lies through the replacement of the centrist leadership, "which is organically incapable of carrying out reform." (Rakovsky.)

Centrism, with its political program that causes disappointment and a decline in activity even among the most revolutionary section of the working class, makes it easier for the Mensheviks to influence the rest of the masses. By fighting centrism and showing the proletariat the most effective ways to save its dictatorship, we thereby greatly paralyze the influence of the Mensheviks and other anti-Soviet parties working among the working class. The same can be said of the anarchists and parties that reflect the interests of the peasant bourgeoisie and their accomplices within the official VKP (b).

By fighting these tendencies, we are thereby fighting against the division of the working masses into spheres of influence along the main social axes, against their subordination to various alien class influences, and for their unification and consolidation under the slogan of restoring the proletarian dictatorship. But this task cannot be achieved by influence from without, by simply issuing loud slogans without the necessary preparatory work in all mass workers' organizations.

In this regard, our primary task must be to fight for the proletarian section of the official party, but work in this direction must in no way obscure the need to win over non-party proletarian organizations, especially trade unions.

Only by winning over the entire revolutionary wing of the party and the rev[olutionary] majority of the wor[king] class, as well as by restoring the confidence of the poor and middle strata of the countryside (through the promotion of appropriate economic measures), will we be able to achieve all the necessary reforms.

In the course of our struggle, we will undoubtedly encounter fierce resistance from the Thermidorian-Bonapartist forces. And here the proletariat is faced with the question of the forms that its struggle with them may take, for it will probably not be without an outbreak of civil war.

The official party now represents the coexistence of two camps in a [coming] civil war (L. T[rotsky]).

This coexistence cannot continue for long. One of these camps must perish in order to clear the way for the development of the other.

We cannot, therefore, rely on the official party, "which does not exist as a party", but must set a course for the recreation of the old Leninist party from the proletarian revolutionary sector of the official party and the active, advanced, consciously revolutionary workers who are currently outside the party.

An organized and effective faction of the B[olshevik]-L[eninists] will serve as the basis around which these proletarian revolutionary elements will crystallize and the Leninist party will be revived.

The slogan of splitting the party and creating a second party is Stalin's slogan, who, under the guise of unity, in fact expels the revolutionary elements of the party and implements the "unity" of opportunists with the Thermidorian-Bonapartist elements of the current party. The second party is being created with the help of a split within the VKP by the Besedovskys of all shades, who represent the vanguard of the petty-bourgeois counterrevolution.<sup>[20]</sup> We, on the other hand, are the true representatives of Lenin's party, for whose revival we are fighting together with the advanced workers. We defend the genuine Leninist unity of the proletarian party, which is conceivable only on the basis of ideological and organizational irreconcilability with opportunism and the purification of the revived party from Thermidorian-Bonapartist elements.

In this respect, as in other fundamental questions, we continue to uphold the principles of our platform, which still retains all its significance.

## V. Forms and methods of struggle for reform

Setting ourselves the task of organizing the working masses, we must at the same time realize that the centrist regime and policy objectively lead to the elements of spontaneity in the mass movement prevailing over the degree of organization that the Leninist opposition can give to this movement.

Therefore, even in the event of a spontaneous explosion of the movement, we will not withdraw from our participation in it, because, as Lenin says, in the presence of objective conditions for the immediate revolutionary offensive of the masses, handling this spontaneity "is the *highest* political task of the party."<sup>[21]</sup>

At the same time, we do not indulge spontaneity, we do not submit to it, but strive in every way to overcome it, to subject it to our influence. "To meet the masses halfway does not mean to give in to spontaneity" (L.T.).<sup>[22]</sup>

Now that the majority of the working class (and not even its entire vanguard) has not yet emerged from a state of passive waiting, we must resolutely reject those proposals that are dictated by revolutionary impatience and political immaturity.

Does this mean that we are calling for passivity and suggesting to the advanced elements of the proletariat that they should fatalistically wait until the objective development of events "itself" brings us ready-made results? Not at all!

It only means that we cannot put forward slogans that cannot yet be grasped by the consciousness of the working masses and do not flow from the experience of the masses themselves. The main task of the advanced and conscious workers at this stage of the pol[itical] offensive should not be to issue loud-sounding slogans, but to work hard to create a broad-based underground organization so that, on this basis, using particular and more general conflicts between the workers and the bureaucracy, we can involve more and more of the working masses in the struggle for reform. Until now, the struggle of the working class against the bureaucratic regime has been predominantly individual and anarchic in character. In conditions where the normal activities of trade unions, which have been transformed from bodies defending the interests of workers into auxiliary

bodies of the economic managers, are completely suppressed, workers resort to such forms of struggle as absenteeism, shifting from workplace to workplace, damage to machinery, murder of shock workers, etc.

The Leninist opposition does not highlight all forms of discontent with the existing bureaucratic regime and policies. Its task is to prepare and organize collective and mass resistance to all the violence and policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In this struggle, the proletariat has at its disposal a whole range of methods developed by the previous experience of the labor movement, ranging from organized protests to demonstrations, strikes, etc.

At the level of the movement when it reaches great strength and momentum, it can manifest itself through the spontaneous “unauthorized” implementation of workers’ democracy, the removal and re-election of officials in the party, unions, and councils.

Depending on the degree of development of the mass labor movement, such a traditional weapon of the working class as the strike becomes extremely important. Its use in the present conditions is punished with all the severity of bureaucratic lawlessness, although under Lenin it was included among the recognized means of defense for workers against the bureaucratic abuses of the ru[ling] apparatus. The well-known resolution of the 11th Party Congress on trade unions obliged enterprise committees to lead the workers’ struggle against the bureaucratic perversions of state and economic organs (after exhausting all other means of influence).<sup>[23]</sup>

In the present conditions, the organized use of strikes can play a major role in mobilizing the proletarian forces under the slogans of reforming the party, unions, and councils.

The resolution of the 11th Congress gives us an important means of fighting for the right to strike against the bureaucratic regime. The opposition must show the masses that it is the true representative of Lenin’s line in this regard.

Finally, in conditions approaching the worst-case scenario, when the greatest effort of the proletariat will be required, its struggle may take on its most acute form.

In the event of an open uprising by Bonapartist elements with the aim of a counterrevolutionary coup, the only way to restore the dictatorship will be the armed suppression of the counterrevolution, wherever it may originate.

## VI. Conclusion

The Opposition of B[olshevik]-L[eninists] has always regarded its struggle for party reform as an international task. The Opposition has waged and continues to wage its struggle against the Stalinist leadership in close connection with the general struggle of the left wing of the Comintern against the domination of centrism. Without a change in the centrist leadership of the Comintern, it is impossible to prepare the subjective factor of the international revolution, for the history of Stalin’s leadership is a history of continuous mistakes and defeats of the international proletariat they have caused (Trotsky).

If Stalinist centrism and its dominance in the Comintern grew out of the conditions of relative stabilization of capitalism and a number of defeats of the European proletariat over the last eight years, then success in the struggle against Stalinist opportunism and the revival of the Comintern will be stimulated by the rise of the international workers’ movement.

An analysis of the international situation clearly shows the correctness of the assessment of the Third Con[gress] of the C[ommunist] I[nternational] that ‘the curve of capitalist development as a whole is constantly moving – through temporary upswings – *downwards*; while the curve of the revolution – through all its fluctuations – is moving

*upwards*.’<sup>[24]</sup>

Based on this fact, we can with full confidence expect a new upsurge of the proletarian revolution, which will pull the rug out from under the domination of the centrist bureaucracy and create the shift we’ve been waiting for in favor of the working class and the left wing of the Comintern.

That is precisely why the Leninist opposition never viewed (unlike the Zinovievists and Decists, who both suffered equally from national narrow-mindedness) its struggle against centrism independently of the development of the world situation as a whole.

By waging a stubborn struggle for the revival of the Comintern on the basis of Leninism, we are thereby creating the subjective elements of the future upsurge of the proletarian struggle, preparing the world communist movement’s tomorrow.

The Declaration of 46 was issued by 46 leading Old Bolsheviks on 15 October 1923. It is considered the founding document of the Left Opposition. However, among its signatories were not only supporters of Trotsky but also supporters of the Democratic Centralists and Old Bolsheviks who have had long-standing political differences with Trotsky, especially on the perspective of permanent revolution. The Declaration focused on matters of economic policy and the inner-party regime, largely ignoring questions of international strategy. The full text can be found here: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/10/16/yyac-o16.html>

*The New Course* is a series of articles by Trotsky from December 1923-January 1924, in which he sharply criticized the bureaucratization of the party and the Soviet state and the economic policies of the ruling faction. It is one of the founding documents of the Opposition. It can be accessed here: <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/the-new-course-leon-trotsky-1924/00.html>

This Declaration summed up the principal programmatic views of the newly formed Joint Opposition, led by Trotsky, Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev.

The Platform of the 83 was issued on 25 May 1927. It criticized the Comintern’s class collaborationist policies in China, and the domestic policies of the Soviet Communist Party, and demanded that the Opposition be allowed to present its views to the membership.

The Platform of the 13 was issued in September 1927 and signed by 13 members of the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee.

In the fall of 1926, the Opposition intervened more aggressively at industrial plants to fight for its positions among the working class. Because of the growing censorship by the bureaucracy, the vast majority of workers did not know about and understand the political differences within the party. The bureaucracy responded aggressively to this intervention: After speeches by Trotsky, Piatakov and other leaders of the Opposition at the Aviapribor plant, they were summoned before the Central Control Commission for violating inner-party discipline. Given that the nature of the conflict was not clear to the party as a whole at the time, the Opposition felt forced to beat a retreat. This retreat was officially declared with a statement of 16 October 1926.

The reference here is to a statement signed by Trotsky, Zinoviev and other Opposition leaders, declaring that they would cease factional struggle. This statement was signed after the Stalinist leadership aggressively responded to Opposition leaders’ speeches before industrial workers. Given their lack of a broad-based organization and support among the party masses at the time, the Opposition leaders decided to beat a retreat, avoid being expelled immediately, and instead buy some time to develop their tendency and organization.

The Democratic Centralists were a political tendency within the Bolshevik Party, going back to the days of the civil war, when they opposed the leadership of Lenin-Trotsky from an ultra-left radical standpoint. Their principal leaders signed the Declaration of the 46 in October 1923 and thus formed a bloc with Trotsky in the first stage of the

struggle against Stalinism. Early critics of the bureaucratization of the party, they approached this bureaucratization above all from a national standpoint and concluded, by the mid-1920s, that Thermidor had succeeded. The Democratic Centralists' principal base of support was in Soviet Ukraine. For an overview of the political differences between Trotsky and the Democratic Centralists, see: Leon Trotsky, "Our Differences with the Democratic Centralists" (1928). <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1928/xx/borodai.htm>

What is meant here are specifically workers' meetings with the participation of Oppositionists.

"At a New Stage" is an article draft by Trotsky, likely written in January 1928. It appears to never have been translated but circulated among the Opposition and helped orient it after the expulsion from the party. It is available in Russian in the Leon Trotsky Soviet Papers, Harvard Houghton Library, MS Russ 13, T 3109. [https://iif.harvard.edu/manifects/view/drs:495442682\\$6i](https://iif.harvard.edu/manifects/view/drs:495442682$6i)

In 1928-1929, the Opposition waged a campaign for new collective agreements at state enterprises, organizing several demonstrations and strikes by workers and speaking at factory meetings. The campaign created immense alarm in the Stalinist leadership which responded by escalating its GPU crack-down on the Opposition.

The source of this quote is not clear.

This Declaration was written by Christian Rakovsky, Mikhail Okudzhava and Vladimir Kossior, signed by some 500 exiled and imprisoned Oppositionists and published in the Russian *Bulletin of the Opposition*. It is available in Russian here: <https://iskra-research.org/Fl/BO/BO-06.shtml>

Vissarion Vissarionovich Lominadze (1897-1935) was party leader in the Caucasus. Like many long-standing party members at the time, he was disturbed by the consequences of forced collectivization and industrialization and established ties with another disillusioned party leader, Sergei Syrtsov, and several leaders of the Communist Youth Organization (Komsomol). They were accused of forming a "Right-Ultraleft Bloc". The so called "Lominadze affair" was one of several symptoms of growing unrest within the party apparatus during the first five-year plan. See also: Vadim Rogovin, *Bolsheviks Against Stalinism, 1928-1933. Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition*, Detroit, MI: Mehring Books, 2019, pp. 215-220.

The Declaration of the Four from April 1930 was authored by Opposition leaders Christian Rakovsky, Nikolai Muralov, Vladimir Kossior and Varvara Kasporova. It was published (in part) in English translation and can be accessed here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/rakovsky/1930/04/situation.htm>. The full Russian text is available here: <https://iskra-research.org/Fl/BO/BO-17.shtml>

It is not clear what document is meant here

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In his letter to Alexander Beloborodov, Trotsky outlined what he regarded as the principal mistakes of the Opposition over the preceding years of struggle. A translation of the letter is available here: [https://wikirouge.net/texts/en/Letter\\_to\\_Alexander\\_Beloborodov,\\_May\\_23,\\_1928](https://wikirouge.net/texts/en/Letter_to_Alexander_Beloborodov,_May_23,_1928)

There is no letter with that date in the Leon Trotsky Archives at Harvard University's Houghton Library. It may have gotten lost or the date indicated here is incorrect.

Grigory Zinovievich Besedovsky (1896-1963?) was a high-ranking Soviet diplomat who defected in 1929, fearing arrest for economic crimes. He was granted political asylum by France and began writing for newspapers of the counter-revolutionary White emigration in Paris. In January 1930, a Soviet court sentenced him in absentia to 10 years in prison for embezzlement.

The source of the quote is not clear.

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Resolution of the 11th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1922: "On the role and tasks of the trade unions under conditions of the New Economic Policy". The Russian original text can be accessed here: <https://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/354792>

Leon Trotsky, "Theses of the Third World Congress on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern", adopted unanimously by the Sixth Session of the Third Congress of the Communist International on July 4, 1921. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/ffyci-1/ch21.htm>. Emphasis in the original.

[1] The Declaration of 46 was issued by 46 leading Old Bolsheviks on 15 October 1923. It is considered the founding document of the Left Opposition. However, among its signatories were not only supporters of Trotsky but also supporters of the Democratic Centralists and Old Bolsheviks who have had long-standing political differences with Trotsky, especially on the perspective of permanent revolution. The Declaration focused on matters of economic policy and the inner-party regime, largely ignoring questions of international strategy. The full text can be found <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/10/16/yyac-o16.html>

[2] *The New Course* is a series of articles by Trotsky from December 1923-January 1924, in which he sharply criticized the bureaucratization of the party and the Soviet state and the economic policies of the ruling faction. It is one of the founding documents of the Opposition. It can be <https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/the-new-course-leon-trotsky-1924/00.html>

[3] This Declaration summed up the principal programmatic views of the newly formed Joint Opposition, led by Trotsky, Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev.

[4] The Platform of the 83 was issued on 25 May 1927. It criticized the Comintern's class collaborationist policies in China, and the domestic policies of the Soviet Communist Party, and demanded that the Opposition be allowed to present its views to the membership.

[5] The Platform of the 13 was issued in September 1927 and signed by 13 members of the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee.

[6] In the fall of 1926, the Opposition intervened more aggressively at industrial plants to fight for its positions among the working class. Because of the growing censorship by the bureaucracy, the vast majority of workers did not know about and understand the political differences within the party. The bureaucracy responded aggressively to this intervention: After speeches by Trotsky, Piatakov and other leaders of the Opposition at the Aviapribor plant, they were summoned before the Central Control Commission for violating inner-party discipline. Given that the nature of the conflict was not clear to the party as a whole at the time, the Opposition felt forced to beat a retreat. This retreat was officially declared with a statement of 16 October 1926.

[7] The reference here is to a statement signed by Trotsky, Zinoviev and other Opposition leaders, declaring that they would cease factional struggle. This statement was signed after the Stalinist leadership aggressively responded to Opposition leaders' speeches before industrial workers. Given their lack of a broad-based organization and support among the party masses at the time, the Opposition leaders decided to beat a retreat, avoid being expelled being immediately, and instead buy some time to develop their tendency and organization.

[8] The Democratic Centralists were a political tendency within the Bolshevik Party, going back to the days of the civil war, when they opposed the leadership of Lenin-Trotsky from an ultra-left radical standpoint. Their principal leaders signed the Declaration of the 46 in October 1923 and thus formed a bloc with Trotsky in the first stage of the struggle against Stalinism. Early critics of the bureaucratization of the

party, they approached this bureaucratization above all from a national standpoint and concluded, by the mid-1920s, that Thermidor had succeeded. The Democratic Centralists' principal base of support was in Soviet Ukraine. For an overview of the political differences between Trotsky and the Democratic Centralists, see: Leon Trotsky, "Our Differences with the Democratic Centralists (1928-1929)" [prodati.htm](http://prodati.htm)

[9] What is meant here are specifically workers' meetings with the participation of Oppositionists.

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[10] “At a New Stage” is an article draft by Trotsky, likely written in January 1928. It appears to never have been translated but circulated among the Opposition and helped orient it after the expulsion from the party. It is available in Russian in the Leon Trotsky Soviet Papers,

[11] In 1928-1929, the Opposition waged a campaign for new collective agreements at state enterprises, organizing several demonstrations and strikes by workers and speaking at factory meetings. The campaign created immense alarm in the Stalinist leadership which responded by escalating its GPU crack-down on the Opposition.

[13] This Declaration was written by Christian Rakovsky, Mikhail Okudzhava and Vladimir Kossior, signed by some 500 exiled and imprisoned Oppositionists and published in the Russian *Bulletin of the Opposition*. It is available at <https://iskra-research.org/ElH/BO/BO-06.shtml>

[15] The Declaration of the Four from April 1930 was authored by Opposition leaders Christian Rakovsky, Nikolai Muralov, Vladimir Kossior and Varvara Kasporova. It was published (in part) in English <https://www.uscib.org/press/rakovsky/1930/04/situation.htm>. The full Russian text is available here: <https://iskra-research.org/FI/BO/BO-17.shtml>

[17] It is not clear what document is referred to here.

[19] There is no letter with that date in the Leon Trotsky Archives at Harvard University's Houghton Library. It may have gotten lost or the date indicated here is incorrect.

[21] The source of the quote is not clear.

[23] Resolution of the 11th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1922: “On the role and tasks of the trade unions under conditions of the New Economic Policy in the Russian Federation.” The text can be accessed here: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Doc/NEP/NEP11.html>