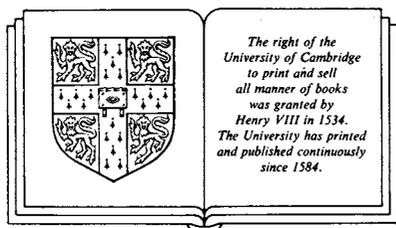


New directions in Soviet history

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1 Gorbachev and history

Pierre Broué

Everybody agrees that the writing of history falls heavily under the influence of the predominant political power, which is never indifferent to it. But the problem is particularly acute for the Soviet Union. Friends and foes alike have tended to agree that the history of the party is the backbone of Soviet history in general and that it ought at every moment to be revised and according to the needs of the time; that is, according to every turn in politics.

Is this still the case with history in the time of Gorbachev? Is it possible to say that, as it was before, the changes in Soviet history result today from the will of the General Secretary and from his decision? Discussion on these matters is still in its early stages. It is quite sure that Gorbachev wanted some changes, but not at all clear that he wanted such drastic changes as those that have occurred. It is sure that he wanted some measure of debate, but not at all clear that he wished to open so wide a debate.

According to one section of Western opinion, anyway, nothing new has happened in Eastern Europe. For members of the Western school called by Stephen Cohen 'counter-communists', we are witnessing a reform from above and the debate has been staged from the very beginning by the political power.

Others state on the contrary that Gorbachev's conception of the making of history is something radically new, that he really wanted free discussion and competition between antagonistic schools of thought and that, in that field at least, he won his war against the Stalinist past.

Gorbachev's 'Historical' Speech

The orientation as well as the limits of the changes in Soviet historiography were set by Gorbachev in his 2 November 1987 report, delivered on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution.¹

In his report, Gorbachev explained at length the reasons which give Soviet history so tremendous an importance, the last but not the least of

which is the necessity of drawing lessons from past experience and by this means advancing the cause of perestroika.

Concerning the oppositions, the report was rather limited and unconvincing, asserting that the Left Opposition – he seems to have stopped in his investigation in the year 1925 – was a ‘hostile’ trend and that Stalin struggled against them in defence of Leninism. He praised industrialization and collectivization, stating that ‘Bukharin and his supporters underestimated in practice the importance of the factor of time in the construction of socialism in the 1930s’. For Gorbachev, there was no alternative to Stalin in the thirties. According to him, mass repression at that time affected ‘many thousands of party members and non-party people’ – quite an underestimation.

However – and here he went farther than Khrushchev – he mentioned ‘the administrative-command system’, ‘an atmosphere of intolerance, enmity and suspicion, the cult of the individual’, ‘arbitrariness and repressions’. He insisted upon the necessity of throwing a complete light on the repressions, not only for the memory of the victims, but also to help the present tasks of perestroika, ‘democratization, legality, glasnost and the elimination of bureaucracy’. Then he defended the Hitler–Stalin Pact of 1939, which, according to him, saved not only socialism but the very existence of the Soviet Union.

On 8 January 1988 Gorbachev returned to the history problem, asserting:

The understanding of our history which we achieved in preparing for the 70th anniversary of October is not something frozen and given once and for all. It will be deepened and developed in the course of further research.²

And more precisely, on 18 February 1988:

There are not and cannot be any constraints on truly scientific investigation. Questions of theory cannot and must not be resolved by any kind of decree. We need the free competition of minds.³

When Gorbachev took up position on the question of a free competition of ideas in history, three ways lay open before Soviet historians.

The first was Stalinist orthodoxy, more or less damaged by destalinization and the opening up of some gaps in that orthodoxy. Was Trotsky, for instance, a non-person or the Devil? What about the military chiefs’ criticism of Stalin, already formulated in Khrushchev’s time? What about the Old Bolsheviks sentenced to death during the Moscow Trials and never rehabilitated at that time? All had been seriously shaken, except one certainty: Stalin might not have been always right, but the party itself was. It took the historical decisions, it

settled every matter correctly: so, the bulk of Gorbachev's report could be accepted in its entirety by every Stalinist apparatchik.

The second way was what Cohen calls 'counter-communism', the Cold War ideology and Sovietology. For its supporters, the political history of Soviet Union was a political history like no other. For them, according to Cohen's summary, the Bolsheviks had won in October 1917 because of their 'Machiavellian leaders, centralized organization, disciplined membership and manipulation of the masses'. The party won the Civil War through 'demagogy, ruthlessness, and organization'. NEP (the New Economic Policy) was only 'a cunning programmatic manoeuvre by the increasingly totalitarian party'. Stalinist policies of the 1930s and after, including forcible collectivization and mass terror, were explained as the inevitable culmination of the party's original 'blueprint'.

Such a general conception, 'studying the past for the sake of the present', led to bare 'moral judgments' detached from their historical context, and sought at any price an 'unfolding logic' and 'historical unbroken continuity' between Bolshevism and Stalinism.⁴ These schematic ideas still constitute the framework of 'Soviet history' as seen by the Western media and a majority of politicians in the Western world. They have nothing in common with a real history, conscious of contradictions and inequality of developments; and are, in fact, a Cold War ideology.

And finally a third conception began to take shape, a critical one, born in the West from the reaction against counter-communism. Some who at first held this third view of history discovered the dialectical movement of 1917 between the masses and the Bolshevik leadership, looked for changes in the party, the struggle between members and apparatus, social influences to explain political conflict, and so forth. In some aspects and fields of interests, it came very close to the Marxist school related to Trotsky and several European historians who tried to find a social key explaining the 'degeneration' of the Bolshevik party by the birth of a bureaucratic stratum, usurping the power for themselves.

Such were in 1987-1988 the three paths opening before Soviet historians at the crossroads of perestroika. It is indisputable that, taking into account the material means of Western publishers and the freedom of circulation of books, journals and papers of this character, the second had the best chance of taking the lead.

The Pattern of Change

Everything seemed to begin according to the usual pattern: in the first ranks, the writers, playwrights, novelists and film-makers, then in a

second stage the historians themselves, beginning with those who had suffered from censorship in the Brezhnev times and whose files are full of the long forbidden results of their past investigations.

The kick-off was given by Rybakov's novel, *Children of the Arbat*, the play by Mikhail Shatrov, *Onward . . . Onward . . . Onward*, and by Abuladze's film *Repentance*. Shatrov's play, published in January 1987, using archival documents, giving the floor to Trotsky and other victims of Stalin, showing the opposition between Lenin and Stalin, provoked real anger among the apparatchiki and conservative-minded people and created an atmosphere of protest, amid which was published, in *Sovetskaiia Rossiia* on 13 March 1988, Andreeva's famous letter, the conservatives' political manifesto as well as a declaration of war against 'new history', that is non-Stalinist interpretations.

The party leadership's riposte, a full-page article in *Pravda* on 5 April 1988, opened wide the door to a real debate in the field of history. The simultaneous rehabilitation of the accused of the 1936–7 Moscow trials, including people like Zinoviev, Kamenev, I. N. Smirnov, Piatakov and Radek, added fuel to the controversy. And finally in the summer, the true historians, beginning with the peasant history specialist V. P. Danilov, followed by Polikarpov and others, entered the arena. The debate was really beginning.

At the time, no new conditions had as yet been created for investigation and nobody could guess who would win the contest and even whether the new historians would be able to hold the floor for several months. From that time on, one had entered in the field of uncertainty, immersed in a debate which was not expected by the leaders but which obliged them, because of the passionate interest of a large part of the nascent public opinion, to accept it.

In order to attempt a description of the rewriting of contemporary history in the USSR we will closely follow the line of the actual development, which began with the rehabilitation of the main actors and leaders – some measure of personalization being probably unavoidable after the deification and demonization which had taken place for almost two thirds of the century.

Lenin

Followers and sympathizers of the 'counter-communist' ideology have often regretted in the media during recent years that Lenin should have remained immune at the time of the new writing of revolutionary history. But now this subject also has been broached.

In the spring of 1988, Lenin was for the first time reassessed and

severely set on by Vasilii Seliunin. Ferociously criticizing the repressive decrees against so-called speculators, Seliunin sought to demonstrate that it was not hunger which led to requisitions but rather the requisitions whose consequences were hunger and famine. He reminded his readers that Lenin was an irreconcilable enemy of the market and repeated that the free market meant the triumph of capitalism. According to him, the *kulaks* had already been destroyed as a class during the period of War Communism, that is long before the end of NEP. For him, Lenin shared his bad record with Trotsky, whom he called the theoretician of 'barracks socialism', who wanted to turn the whole country into a system of gigantic concentration camps – which, as we know, was done years later by Stalin, his police and party apparatus.⁵

Finally Seliunin considered War Communism and the Stalinist system as continuing the harmful road of state compulsion initiated by Lenin. Still more categorical was the nationalist Kozhinov, for whom the main cause of repressive mass actions was the nature of revolution as such. Like the French Revolution, the October Revolution opened the door to lawlessness and ruthless mass violence, engendered not by the Russian tradition but by the revolutionary one, embodied by Lenin.⁶

Seliunin found many followers. The most famous was at the end of 1988 and the beginning of 1989, the series of articles by Alexander Tshipko entitled 'The sources of Stalinism'.⁷ The most violent came from the émigré journal *Posev* and was signed by Vladimir Solukhin,⁸ who argued that Russia had been conquered by Lenin's group and submitted to 'a more cruel occupation regime than the history of humanity had known in any century'.⁹

More recently, the historian Tamara Krasotskaia has accused Lenin of responsibility for the expulsion from Russia of about two hundred members of the intelligentsia, among them the philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev.¹⁰ The 'Leninist party', but also the person of Lenin, have been savagely attacked by the historian Iurii Afanasyev.¹¹ Whether it turns out to be true or not, what better instance of the present trend could there be than the rumour according to which Dmitrii Volkogonov is finishing his Trotsky biography with some sort of acknowledgement that Trotsky committed only one mistake, to be true to Lenin and to the October Revolution?

Bukharin

Also coming from hell, Bukharin, as we know, was for a time made the patron saint of perestroika, an honour which fell upon him because of his reputation as defender of a renewed and more profound NEP, an

ancestor of the 'market economy', and as a result of a clever political campaign led by political clubs inspired by Vasilii Pisigin which were to become the 'Bukharin Clubs'.

During the months which followed his official rehabilitation, then his reinstatement in the party, several historians and politicians wrote as if there had been a 'Bukharin alternative' against Stalin. Even *Pravda* asserted that such an alternative had been 'the defence of the socialist concept against Stalinist distortions'.¹²

Such an interpretation, contrary to Gorbachev's assertions in his November report, was fought among others by Stalin's biographer, Volkogonov, who could easily lay stress on the Bukharin–Stalin alliance against Trotsky. The explanation offered by Volkogonov – Bukharin's repentance (*Literaturnaia gazeta*, 9 December 1987) – cannot be accepted, even in view of Bukharin's posthumous letter to the future party leaders.

Nobody has as yet seriously discussed the explanation given by Trotsky. Bukharin's policy was developed in the framework of NEP. After the abandonment of NEP by Stalin, the only 'Bukharin alternative' could have been an alliance with the class enemies of Bolshevism, *kulaks* and *Nepmen*, and so there could be no 'alternative' for Bukharin in the USSR of the thirties.

A volume of Bukharin's *Selected Works* was published by Politizdat in 1988. It included two important texts already republished at the time: 'Lenin's Testament' and 'Notes of an Economist'. There were also published *Problemy teorii i praktiki sotsializma* (1989) and *Put' k sotsializmu* (Novosibirsk, 1990). The memories of Anna Larina, his widow (*Nezabyvaemoe*, 1990), show a Bukharin far removed from legend. In 1990 his fans in Pisigin's Bukharin Club published his writings on youth, *K novomu pokoleniiu*.

Trotsky

Trotsky had the great honour of having been the one before whom the Stalinists never disarmed. *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, on 27 September 1987, still published a paper by V. M. Ivanov with the traditional slanders, under the title 'New face for a little Judas'. Attacks against him have continued since then, denying his role as commander of the Red Army and accusing him of major crimes such as execution without trial and the arrest of innocent people – in a word, he has been characterized as a hangman, and moreover a Jew, for these attacks carry with them the unavoidable reek of anti-semitism.

It is not surprising, then, that during the first stages of perestroika,

Trotsky was presented in USSR as well as in the West as the one who had thought up and even baptized the concentration camps, the 'Gulag', working relentlessly for the establishment of 'barracks socialism'!

The works of Volkogonov and even N. A. Vasetsky, who has also written on Trotsky, are of another brand. Their conceptions mark a real retreat from the slanders of the Stalinist period, and Trotsky gets back his prominent role both in the 1905 Revolution and at the head of the Red Army and so on. One may read, for instance, Volkogonov's 'Trotsky at the front'.¹³ But for the following period they maintain, at least to some degree, the 'party line' – that is, the Stalinist slanders and distortions. Vasetsky recognized that Trotsky was murdered by a Stalinist agent, but at a time when everybody already knew it. The surprising assertion of a journalist according to which Trotsky and Mercader were both Stalin's victims has to be explained by psychoanalysis and by the journalist's own father's functions in Stalin's murder apparatus.

From the Soviet Union came the best criticism of the Volkogonov-Vasetsky school by A. V. Pantsov under the Trotsky-like title of 'The New School of Falsification'.¹⁴ However, the year 1989 saw interesting publications of Trotsky works: *New Course*,¹⁵ *The Letter to Ispart*,¹⁶ *Our Differences*,¹⁷ extracts from *Revolution Betrayed*¹⁸ and *Permanent Revolution*,¹⁹ *Revolutionary Portraits*,²⁰ *Stalin*,²¹ *Literature and Revolution* and *Exile Diary*.²² V. P. Danilov published, first, unknown extracts of Trotsky's speech before the Central Committee in October 1923,²³ then the text in its entirety.²⁴ The first articles and studies appeared under the pen of V. I. Startsev, V. P. Danilov, V. I. Billik, A. V. Pantsov, A. M. Poshchekoldin, and others.²⁵

Vasetsky edited a volume of Trotsky's selected works.²⁶ The Novosibirsk magazine *EKO* has published three chapters of my own biography of Trotsky and a review of it by V. P. Danilov.²⁷ Now the book *The Stalin School of Falsification* itself has been published in a reprint edition. And we are expecting the appearance of *Revolution Betrayed* and *History of the Russian Revolution*. Three articles were published in 1990 by young writers, all of them apparently sympathetic towards Trotsky's ideas: V. Z. Rogovin, a sociologist, A. V. Pantsov and A. Iu. Vatlin, both of them historians.²⁸

The 50th anniversary of Trotsky's murder was commented upon in the USSR. *Izvestiia*²⁹ published an unknown letter from Natalia Trotsky to President Cárdenas. Ramón Mercader's brother, Luis, attempted to present the murderer as a victim.³⁰ Karen Matchaturov explained once more that Trotsky and Stalin were both 'worse' than the other leaders,³¹ but Genrikh Ioffe³² admitted that Trotsky at least had been true to the

revolutionary idea. Tsipko, a former CC apparatchik, attacked savagely, trying to imagine what Trotsky in power would have done (*Daugava*, no. 7, 1990).

With the financial sponsorship of American stars like Paul Newman and Dustin Hoffman, Vanessa Redgrave organized a 'Symposium 90' in Britain, a conference with Soviet historians,³³ carefully concealed from Western scholars. However, some lectures have been published.

The end of March 1990 saw a Trotsky symposium in Wuppertal, held with the participation of almost twenty Soviet scholars. Another, much more interesting, organized by Terry Brotherstone, was held at Aberdeen University in Scotland, then another one in Mexico City, the Trotsky Symposium in São Paulo University in September, organized by Osvaldo Coggiola, and finally a Tokyo symposium organized by Yashinobu Shiokawa. These are sure indications of a widespread interest in a Trotsky who is neither a demon nor a non-person but an historical figure of authentically gigantic importance.

Stalin

Gorbachev's friends sowed the rumour that Mikhail Sergeevich was already General Secretary of the CPSU when he was able to see for himself documents demonstrating the personal responsibility of Stalin for the slaughter of thousands of victims of the Great Purge, long lists of names signed by him, approving their execution and so forth.

New revelations show that Stalin violently beat some of his collaborators, including Beria,³⁴ that he had Kaganovich, Kalinin and Molotov's wife arrested, as well as one of the brothers of Kaganovich, driving a third to suicide, and that his personal secretary A. N. Poskrebyshv fell on his knees before him imploring for his wife a mercy which was refused!³⁵ Everybody knows now that, as *Pravda* wrote, Stalin 'did not simply know' the acts of illegality, 'he organized them, directed them. Today this is a fact, already proved'.³⁶ Many examples have been given.

Other information, based upon the personal notes of Stalin, throw some light upon his personality, his cruelty, his ability to dissimulate, his passion for intrigue and his love of torturing and killing not only his enemies but those completely unknown to him.

Here, too, Volkogonov made an attempt to save Stalinism by partly sacrificing Stalin. In his book *Triumph and Tragedy* (1989) he attempts to show that 'one man's triumph has often resulted in tragedy for a whole people'. He speaks of 'Stalin's undisputable contribution to the struggle for socialism' and at the same time of 'an unjustified repression against many thousands of innocent people'. For him, in Stalin as in

other big leaders, 'the human being was killed by the power'! 'Stalin regarded society as a human zoo.'³⁷

New publications mention the famous diagnosis of Doctor Bekhterev, according to which Stalin suffered from paranoia. But one may ask oneself whether such an opinion, when expressed today, could not be the last means of saving Stalinism by sacrificing Stalin himself.

Many a discussion took place on the question of the genesis of Stalin and Stalinism. How could all that become possible? Alec Nove³⁸ summarized perfectly the discussion waged by Roy Medvedev and others, particularly the outspoken views of Mikhail Gefter. To conclude, one could cite an opinion expressed by O. Latsis:

Usurping not only the rights of the party but also the rights of workers and peasants, Stalin had to extend his measures of suppression beyond the party leaders. He would not arrest all the workers and peasants, though the system of Gulag did represent a large-scale experiment in creating a special kind of 'working class', but objectively everyone represented a danger for Stalin, as he acted against the basic interests of both workers and peasants.³⁹

Many other people have been reexamined and their biographies had to be rewritten, for the worse or the better. In the first category we have to mention Molotov, Voroshilov, Budenny, Zhdanov, Kaganovich (who is still alive), Suslov and Vyshinsky. Others have been rehabilitated: let us mention Zinoviev and Kamenev, Christian Rakovsky, N. I. Muralov and the people whose children took the floor, Ikramov, Smilga, Krestinsky, V. A. Antonov-Ovseenko, Rykov, Piatnitsky, Radek, Putna, Preobrazhensky, Shliapnikov, Lominadze, Serebriakov, Lomov and many others.

The problem of the bureaucracy

The debate upon the origins and the meaning of Stalinism requires some explanation concerning its class roots. What forces did Stalin represent that enabled him to 'act against the basic interests of the workers and the peasants'?

One of the first scholars who tried to answer that question is Dzarasov, for whom the bureaucracy arose after Lenin's death as a social group alien to socialism, 'a rule of officials incompatible with democracy'. The main basis of the Stalinist system is the bureaucracy and the bureaucrats whose interests it defends.⁴⁰

What is its class nature? Dzarasov does not answer. In a round-table discussion,⁴¹ Anatolii Butenko, who surprisingly asserts – completely forgetting the very existence of Trotsky – that 'no one endeavoured to

analyse [our] society from the point of view of the growth and strengthening of the bureaucracy', sees in the 'huge stratum of state and party bureaucracy, torn away from the people and not under its control' a 'huge danger for socialism'.

V. V. Zhuravlev severely criticizes the 'abstraction' of Butenko's answer to the question of the 'class nature' of the bureaucracy and asserts that, 'despite all its efforts to achieve power for itself', the bureaucracy 'does not cease to be the instrument of a definite class', an opinion that R. W. Davies thinks not remote from Trotsky's own analysis⁴² (an assessment I should have wished to discuss further had space permitted). Butenko answered Zhuravlev in the columns of *Voprosy istorii KPSS* (1988, no. 7).

One of the most interesting works on this theme appeared in *Argumenty i fakty* under the title 'Factories to the workers, privileges to the bureaucrats'.⁴³ This study by A. M. Poshchekoldin is the first to investigate the origins of the crystallization of the bureaucratic apparatus under the guidance of the Secretariat and of the *Gensek* (General Secretary) himself. In line with Trotsky's instruments of analysis, V. A. Kozlov and E. G. Plimak followed the trail of investigating the 'Soviet Thermidor'.⁴⁴

The general line of development

In his chapter on 'Russia before the Bolshevik revolution' in *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution* (1989), R. W. Davies revealed very clearly the mixing up of various interests one may see through the differences which only reflect present concerns projected into the past.⁴⁵ In his commentary on the serfs' emancipation in 1864, for instance, Vaksberg compares it with the freeing of wholesale trade which today is one of the demands of the supporters of the market economy.⁴⁶ Gavriil Popov, a democrat and now mayor of Moscow, underlines the limits of the impact of that emancipation, stating that it was insignificant because the people concerned – the serfs themselves – did not take any part in it.⁴⁷ The same author, with Nikolai Shmelev, regrets the failure of what he calls the 'Stolypin alternative'.⁴⁸

In the same way, at the time of the celebration of its millennium in 1988 we heard the expression of a wide range of differences concerning the historical role of the Orthodox Russian Church. Academician Dmitrii Likhachev, however contradicted by Aleksandr Iakovlev,⁴⁹ celebrated the Old Believers and the Church's contribution to Russian traditional culture.⁵⁰

There has been an important debate concerning the Russian past and

its 'Asiatic' aspects. We know that Stalin saw in the persons of Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible modernizers by means of terror, and that a link has often been established between the three of them. Rybakov even spoke of 'Asiatic despotism' and of its Russian application. He was contradicted by Kozhinov who believed that revolution is the root of all evil, particularly despotism, Asiatic or otherwise.⁵¹ The same difference exists about the question of industrial development in Russia. For Kliamkin, the credit for industrialization belongs to the autocracy which, by the way, created the only force capable of destroying it: the working class.⁵² Seliunin, of course, credits the birth and the free running of the market for economic progress and development, in spite of state intervention and the hinderance of such ancient traditions as the *mir*.⁵³

We must respect everybody's opinion, but we think that we must cite here Professor Davies on Seliunin, saying that 'he comes very close to offering a historical justification for the establishment of a capitalist system in the Soviet Union'⁵⁴ – a remark which casts a useful light on the methodological problems of our theme. The underlying opinion in many judgements about October is not that the Bolsheviks were wrong in taking power but rather that they were wrong to take it alone. For many writers, October is denied the quality of 'revolution' and becomes an ordinary 'coup', in opposition to February which was carried out by the masses.

A recent article by Genrikh Ioffe is in fact an apologia for Martov, making the latter's break with the Bolsheviks the fatal misfortune of the Russian Revolution.⁵⁵ Present-day historians seem to be more unsure about the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, who could have been in their opinion better 'democrats' than the Bolsheviks but were wrong either in their alliance with them or in taking the initiative in breaking with and then resorting to arms against them. There is no great abundance of literature on the Civil War and only a strong interest in the Whites as victims. Details have been published about the murder of the Tsar's family, generally considered an act of senseless cruelty.⁵⁶

We owe the first serious study of the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations without slanders or distortions of Trotsky's position to A. V. Pantsov,⁵⁷ and we owe two others to N. A. Vasetsky and V. V. Zhuravlev.⁵⁸ We may also note that V. Golovanov has been one of the first to give back to Makhno, described as a bandit during the Stalin era, his true physiognomy as an anarchist fighter, even mentioning the 'trap' contained in the Bolshevik proposals which appeared to offer him a limited territorial autonomy.⁵⁹

Magazine articles often underline the ruthlessness of the requisitions

in the country during the War Communism: peasants were called kulaks and stripped of everything, food and seeds included. Although it is frequently mentioned, the Kronstadt uprising is seldom studied, with the exception of a good clarifying summary by Roy Medvedev.⁶⁰ By contrast, a particular interest in the Cossack chief F. K. Mironov, shot in 1921, has drawn some attention to what is now called a 'decossackization' and to the responsibility of Budenny for their repression.⁶¹

The questions most discussed about the post-Civil War years relate to the party's internal regime. S. S. Dzarasov⁶² emphasizes that at the 10th Congress Lenin argued against Riazanov in favour of proportional elections to the Central Committee based upon the competition of different platforms.⁶³ Burganov thinks that the banning of factions at the same congress had very negative consequences and became one of the Stalin's main weapons against the party itself.⁶⁴

There is now some discussion about Lenin's orientation in the last period of his life. We have already mentioned the attacks against him and his attitude towards the intelligentsia. Starostin and Shatrov think that he was trying to liberalize the regime and was seeking some arrangement with the Mensheviks.⁶⁵ A study by V. I. Startsev on 'Lenin and Trotsky 1922–1923' opens a new road to Soviet investigators in this connection.⁶⁶

One of the most interesting documents as yet published in USSR is the interview by Zhuravlev and Nenokarov in *Pravda* about the Georgian case of 1922.⁶⁷ Based upon archival material, particularly Rykov's correspondence at the time of his trip to Tbilisi, it gives a clear confirmation of the quality of Trotsky's memory and of his honesty as a historian. The last letters of Trotsky to Lenin have also been recently published.⁶⁸ Elena Kotelenets lectured in Tokyo on 'Trotsky and the nationalities question' and A. Kan in Aberdeen on 'Trotsky and small nations'.⁶⁹

The crisis at the time of the debate upon the 'New Course' has been thoroughly studied by A. M. Poshchekoldin in his 'Prologue of a Tragedy', which has still to be completed with the publication of new and unknown documents.⁷⁰ The Russian reader is now able to read the text of the 'Letter of the 46' on the question of party democracy.⁷¹ It is now recognized that the results of the votes in the party contest in Moscow were falsified by Stalin's men. A testimony of a former aide-de-camp of V. A. Antonov-Ovseenko, recorded by Anton Antonov-Ovseenko, asserts that several military collaborators of Trotsky including Muralov and Antonov-Ovseenko himself thought that a minor military coup could have swept away Stalin's clique without any problem, but that Trotsky refused any action of that kind.⁷² Danilov – it was in itself a minor scandal – published extracts of a speech by Trotsky in the Central

Committee in October 1923, a clear illustration that the fight was for the control of the party, between the party itself and its own apparatus embodied by Stalin.⁷³

Concerning 1924, the same Antonov mentions letters from Stalin to Lakoba in an effort to keep Trotsky far from Moscow at the time of Lenin's burial.⁷⁴ We have learned that, contrary to what everybody believed, Trotsky voted in the Politburo for the publication of Lenin's Testament but found himself in a minority,⁷⁵ which explains his silence at the Central Committee session that discussed the issue.

One of the most heated discussions is the one about NEP, the rate of economic growth at that time and its results. Yevgenii Ambartsumov, Latsis, Tikhonov and Seliunin⁷⁶ all describe it as a tremendous success and try to demonstrate that NEP of the past is the model for today. They generally deny the existence of what was called 'the kulak danger' at the time. But G. Khanin does not see any success in NEP⁷⁷ and we have had to wait until 1990 for more serious studies by M. M. Gorinov⁷⁸ and N. S. Simonov.⁷⁹

V. P. Danilov, who was muzzled for years, is indignant about the 'discovery' of such a miraculous rate of growth, and protests against the attempt to discredit the cooperative idea;⁸⁰ he also believes in the existence of the 'kulak danger' and its pressure upon the Soviet authorities.

Many authors think that NEP in general was the road towards a politics opposed to Stalin's and call it the 'Bukharin alternative'. Danilov for his part sees three alternatives, Bukharin's, Stalin's and Gosplan's.⁸¹ Kliamkin, while recognizing that Trotsky's Left criticism took place within the framework of NEP, is with Danilov one of the rare historians who admit that Trotsky was not an adversary of NEP nor a supporter of forcible collectivization.⁸² Around these problems, the main articles of the polemics between Bukharin and Preobrazhensky have been published and commented on without distortions.⁸³

The same disagreements arise concerning the end of the NEP. For some authors it was something like a deliberate decision by Stalin, the choice of a society. Others mention the grain delivery strike, which obliged Stalin to change course under the pressure of events.

It is only in novels that one can find the shadows and black sides in current descriptions of the NEP: the profits of the speculators, the violations of freedom of expression, the penetration of the party by careerists and businessmen. NEP was often the kingdom of corruption and demoralization. The camps as a system were organized from 1923 on, at the end of two years of NEP.

From the period of collectivization, it seems that no author has even