

**Bruno Rizzi**

# The man who proved Trotsky wrong

By WALTER KENDALL

ON 25th September, 1939, Leon Trotsky, founder of the Red Army—with Lenin chief architect of the Russian Revolution—now an enforced political exile, living in a heavily guarded mansion on the outskirts of Mexico City, under constant threat of assassination by Stalinist agents, found himself thrust forcibly into the last great political battle of his career. In the first round Trotsky emerged the victor. The second never opened: acting on instructions from the Russian Communist Party, Raymond Mercuder, a Stalinist agent, now domiciled in Prague, struck Trotsky dead with an ice axe blow to the head before it could begin.

The death of Leon Trotsky in hospital during the month of August 1940, not only robbed the Marxist movement of its greatest living theoretician, it also made possible the crystallisation of Trotskyism into precisely that type of ossified sect which its progenitor most decried.

Trotsky in a brilliant analysis of the fate of Russia's Revolution had warned in his *Revolution Betrayed*, published in 1937, that, trapped by international isolation and primitive Russian backwardness, proletarian democracy had succumbed to rule by a privileged bureaucracy grouped around the State machine.

**"The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption — when there are little goods, the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order. Such is the starting point of the power of the Soviet bureaucracy. It 'knows' who is to get something and who is to wait." (op. cit.).**

Hitler's bloodless victory over German Communism, the bloody destruction of China's revolution by Russian Communism's chosen ally, Chiang Kai Shek, some years earlier, now combined with fresh developments to convince Trotsky that the Communist International as a revolutionary force was dead. The road to world revolution would lie only through the formation of a new 4th International shortly to be born.

## Campaign of Slander

By 1939 sections of the Trotskyist movement, though small and as yet ineffective, existed in all the major countries of the world. Trotsky's own influence was so feared by the Russian rulers that his name, activities and reputation were subjected to a campaign of vicious, slanderous defamation on a world-wide scale, unequalled in pre-

*(The second of two articles on Bruno Rizzi. The first appeared in last week's 'Socialist Leader'.)*

vious human history and relegating those of the Inquisition against its enemies to the realms of the amateur.

The outbreak of the European War on 4th September, 1939, brought into physical realisation the prophecies of an imminent new world holocaust which Trotsky and his followers had been making for a whole decade. At the same moment the justification of Trotsky's theoretical prognostication threatened to split the largest section of his new born International, that of the U.S.A., into two warring and seemingly irreconcilable halves.

According to Trotsky's analysis, despite the temporary usurpation of political government by a new bureaucracy, the fundamental conquest of the Russian Revolution—the nationalised productive resources—remained intact. Russia, affirmed Trotsky, was a 'workers' State', a 'degenerate workers' State' but still a 'workers' State'. In consequence whilst defending worker and party against the bureaucracy, the world working class movement must also *unconditionally defend the Soviet Union* as a whole against all hostile capitalist intervention from outside.

In 1939 the Communist-Nazi Pact divided mutually invaded Poland impartially between both aggressors. That same year the Soviet Union invaded Finland. "Unconditional defence of the Soviet Union," declared one section of the Trotskyist movement. "An imperialist action unworthy of defence by socialists," declared the other. An open struggle, ending in civil war and split, now commenced.

## Ideological Victory

Trotsky, realising that to accept the pragmatic conclusion that Russia could not be defended because her isolated actions seemed unacceptable would rapidly sap and undermine his

ideological defence of Russia as a 'degenerate workers' State', rapidly opened an offensive against the critics. In an overwhelming flood of brilliant literary elegance,\* Trotsky, in the words of an opponent "drawing on his exceptional intellectual resources, which the minority could not match, using his unrivalled gift of irony, blanketed his opponents under a mounting drumfire of polemic". In April, 1940, the minority (about half the American Trotskyist organisation) withdrew to establish a separate party.

Trotsky's victory was superficially complete. James Burnham, chief theoretician of the minority, rapidly moved to the Right, walked out of the new organisation, wrote the *Managerial Revolution* and, as Trotsky had substantially predicted, emerged as a pillar of capitalist respectability without a trace of socialist consciousness to be found about his person. The minority as a new party never became an effective force.

In fact, Trotsky's apparent ideological victory, followed as it was within almost a matter of weeks by his assassination, sounded the death knell for Trotskyism as a viable, political creed. The critics, like others before and indeed after them, had pointed to practical inconsistencies to which the Trotskyist programme led, Trotsky's sophisticated rationalisations, had preserved the programme intact. They would prove unable to prevent precisely similar splits and raptures at every crucial consequence stage in the Trotskyist movement's history.

## Flash of Genius

In Paris during 1939 a hitherto unknown Italian Left Communist, Bruno Rizzi, published under the name 'Bruno R' a 350-page volume entitled *La Bureaucratization du Monde*. A copy reached Trotsky in Mexico the same year in the midst of the polemical struggle which was settling the whole future of the Trotskyist movement. Rizzi in a breathtaking flash of genius had opened up an entirely new perspective for the proletarian movement. Trotsky felt the necessity to make mention of Rizzi in the debate.

Rizzi declared that world experience showed that the world was going forward neither to socialism nor to cataclysmic catastrophe but instead, by means of bureaucratic encroachment of which Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany and Roosevelt's New Deal were equally examples, to a new world resolved of capitalist contradictions, yet in which not the proletariat but a new bureaucratic middle class grouped around means of production, distribution and exchange and propaganda would emerge as the new ruling class. Soviet Russia, declared

Rizzi, was not an unfortunate aberration but an archetype of possible future development.

Trotsky passionately refuted Rizzi's thesis, reaffirming his view of the temporary nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy. "If this war provokes, as we firmly believe, a proletarian revolution, it must inevitably lead to the overthrow of bureaucracy in the U.S.S.R. and the regeneration of Soviet democracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis than in 1918. In that case the question as to whether the Stalinist bureaucracy was a 'class' . . . will be automatically solved."

## Answer of History

"If, however, it is conceded that the present war will provoke not a revolution but a decline of the proletariat, then there remains another alternative; the further decay of monopoly capitalism, its further fusion with the State, and the replacement of democracy wherever it still remained, by a totalitarian regime. The inability of the proletariat to take into its hands the leadership of society could actually lead under these conditions to the growth of a new exploiting class from the Bonapartist fascist bureaucracy. This would be, according to all the indications, a regime of decline, signalling the end of civilisation."

"Either the Stalin regime is an abortive relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalinist regime is the first stage of a new exploiting society. If . . . the second . . . then, of course, the bureaucracy will become a new exploiting class. However onerous the second perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except only to recognise that the socialist programme, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia. It is self-evident that a new 'minimum' programme would be required for the defence of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society."

Of course, continued Trotsky, undaunted by the phantom which his imagination, prompted by Rizzi, had conjured up from the pit—"But are there such uncontrovertible or even impressive objective data as would compel us today to renounce the perspective of the socialist revolution? That is the whole question?"

In September, 1962, almost 23 years to the day from the hour when Trotsky wrote these words, history has itself delivered an answer. Trotsky's prognosis, and with it Trotskyism, lies in ruins.

The time has come to examine the long forgotten, buried and ignored ideas of Bruno Rizzi.

\*See *In Defence of Marxism*. Pioneer Publishers, New York.