The Early Status of Non-Great Russian Borderlands: Throughout the civil war in the territory of Great Russia a similar type of civil war took place in the non-Great Russian borderlands of White Russia, the Ukraine (including much of Moldavia), the Transcaucasian States of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidzhan, and the Central Asia States of Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tadzhikistan. In all such states a three-sided conflict raged between Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and national separatists. By 1922, the Bolshevik political-military forces had prevailed directly or indirectly in all of the non-Great Russian borderlands. In Georgia, this was only accomplished in a very brutal repressive manner under the leadership of the two Georgian Bolsheviks, Joseph Stalin and Sergo Ordzhonikidze.

The Sovnarkom of the RSFSR then accepted a “request” on December 30, 1922, from the non-Great Russian borderlands to be admitted to a greater Bolshevik state. The question was on what basis: as a federal structure of government with their regional-union sovereignty being contingent on their national-union sovereignty; or their national-union sovereignty being contingent on their regional-union sovereignty. In the former case, the status of regional areas of self-government is determined by membership in the Union, in the latter case, membership in the Union is determined by its status to regional areas of self-government. In the latter case, the regional areas of self-government enjoy the right to secede from the Union (cf. the compact theory of government used by the southern states to justify their claim of secession from the Union). Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities would have preferred the former, as was the case in the RSFSR in which regional-union sovereignty was contingent upon national-union sovereignty. But Lenin argued that such a political status would alienate the populations of the non-Great Russian borderlands with the fear of domination by “Great Russian chauvinism,” as under Tsarist political rule. And Lenin, as the unquestioned final voice of Soviet Communist party authority prevailed.

The Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: On July 6, 1923, a new constitution of the federal union of the existing RSFSR and the borderland states was accepted by the executive branches of government by the borderland areas; and then formerly ratified on January 31, 1924, by an All-Union Congress of Soviets comprised of delegates from the former RSFSR and the Russian borderlands. The essential features of the new constitution included the following:

1. A Federal Union: The constitution of the new Union of Soviet Socialist Republics established a federal union based on the following division of sovereign authority: The federal government would possess sovereignty in foreign affairs and the military, national security, currency and foreign trade, budget and taxation, and transport. The union governments would possess sovereignty in health, public safety, education, and regional culture. The latter included the right to conduct regional matters in regional languages, but all would be required to learn the Great-Russian language as the lingua franca of the whole nation.

As originally constituted in 1924, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was constituted of four union-republics: the Russian Republic, the White Russian Republic, the Ukraine, and the Transcaucasian Republic. Later, by 1940, the USSR would be constituted of fifteen union-republics: the Transcaucasian Republic would be divided into Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaidzhan; Central Asia would be constituted as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kirghizia. The Baltic States would be re-annexed in 1940 as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; and Moldavia would be constituted from the a southwestern part of the Ukraine combined with Bessarabia annexed from Romania in 1940.
(2) **A Bicameral National Legislature:** Like all federal structures of government the USSR was established on the basis of a bicameral legislature: a *Soviet of the Union* and a *Soviet of Nationalities*. In the Soviet of the Union the union republics were represented proportionately to their respective populations; while in the Soviet of Nationalities the union republics were represented disproportionately to their respective populations, with the less populous republics having a disproportionately larger membership to protect their regional national sovereignty. Together, the two bodies were referred to as the *Supreme Soviet*; and all legislation had to be approved by both bodies to be adopted as national legislation.

Like under the RSFSR, the *All-Union Congress of Soviets* was a *large body of some 5,000 members* representing the local and regional Soviets of all the constituent republics and it only sat for several weeks, simply to *formally approve legislation* handed down by a permanent sitting *Central Executive Committee of some 250 members*. The Central Executive Committee in turn approved the legislation handed down by the *Council of People’s Commissars* (Sovnarkom) composed of the highest ranking Communist Party members on the Communist Party Politburo and Central Committee. The Chairman of the Central Executive then served as the *President or Head of State*. *Mikhail Kalinin* who served as the President or Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of RSFSR after the death of Yakov Sverdlov in 1920, then served as the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR from 1924 to 1946.

(3) **The Nomenklatura System:** Like under the RSFSR, former *capitalists, landlords*, and *members of the clergy* were disenfranchised and precluded from serving in public office, and all candidates who did run for public office had to be officially approved by the Communist Party on the *nomenklatura list*. Only in the third constitution of 1936 would all members of Soviet society be officially accorded the right to vote and run for public office on the premise that the former capitalist and landlord classes and religious clergy had been thoroughly *reeducated* into a pro-Soviet consciousness.

(4) **National in Form Socialist in Content:** While technically, each union republic was accorded the right to secede from the national union; the very national form of the union was declared to be founded on a socialist content, i.e., a *universal self-identity to Bolshevik Soviet socialist political rule*. In this, they were declared to be committed to the *all-Union centralized Communist party authority*, that is, the requirements of democratic centralism that Lenin had already called for at the Second Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party Congress in 1903 in declaring that the “decisions of the Central Committee are obligations for all party organizations.” Hence, the right to secede was *moot* since the self-identity of each republic was a self-identity with the all-Union Communist Party.

By 1922, a 40-member Central Committee controlling some 750,000 members of the All-Union Communist Party had also seen its own authority ever more concentrated in an elite *seven-member Politburo*. Five of the seven-member Politburo held top positions in the national government apparatus. They were: *V. I. Lenin* as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, *Aleksel Rykov* as Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers, *Leon Trotsky* as Commissar of War, *Mikhail Tomsky* as Commissar of Labor, and *Joseph Stalin* as Commissar of Nationalities. *Grigori Zinoviev* and *Lev Kamenev* were also members of the Politburo who held high positions of power in the Communist Party apparatus – Zinoviev as Chairman of the Communist Party of the Petrograd Soviet, and Kamenev as Chairman of the Communist Party of the Moscow Soviet. And in addition to being Commissar of Nationalities Joseph Stalin held what was to prove to be the most important position in the Communist Party organization – the position of *General Secretary* of the Communist Party in charge of the *all-Union Communist Party membership*, that is, admissions and expulsions that suited his own political power.

**Lenin’s Testament and Death**

*The Testament of Lenin:* While in decent health, Lenin was the undisputed leader of the Soviet state. But on *August 30, 1918*, he was wounded by an assassination attempt of *Fania Kaplan*, a Socialist Revolutionary in opposition to the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Whether Lenin ever completely recovered from the
gunshot wound is still debated. In any case, on **May 26, 1922**, Lenin suffered a first debilitating stroke which left him politically incapacitated for the next four months, but in October 1922, Lenin declared himself able to resume his duties as head of the Council of Ministers and the Communist Party Politburo. However, on **December 16, 1922**, Lenin suffered a second stroke, and then a third stroke on **March 9, 1923**. The last stroke left Lenin completely bed-ridden and in only a semi-state of full consciousness until his death on **January 21, 1924**.

After his second stroke, Lenin wrote a formal memorandum on **December 23, 1922**, in which he addressed the future leadership of the party. In what has become known as “Lenin’s Testament,” Lenin referred to Trotsky and Stalin as the two “ablest” members of the party. But Lenin also noted that the two also had certain shortcomings. Lenin saw Trotsky as too self-absorbed in his own charismatic leadership and too pre-occupied with his own revolutionary theorizing; and, as such, too little concerned with the everyday mundane tasks of building a party and state apparatus. By way of contrast, Lenin recognized the painstaking administrative skills of Stalin as Communist party **General Secretary**, but Lenin also noted Stalin in the position as General Secretary had “concentrated enormous power in his hands,” and, knowing Stalin was brutal in seeking his political ends, that Lenin was not sure that Stalin would “use that power [as General Secretary] with sufficient caution” in dealing with other party members.

Twelve days later on **January 4, 1923**, in a postscript to his testament Lenin declared that Stalin was “too rude, and this fault becomes unbearable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint it to another man ... more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc.” Later in 1923, before his third stroke in March, Lenin went on to further rebuke Stalin for the way that his fellow Georgian, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, had acted in a heavy-handed fashion to force Armenia and Azerbaidzhan to form a single Transcaucasian Federation.

Finally, in 1923, Lenin also wrote a personal letter to Stalin informing him that he was breaking off all personal relations until he apologized to Lenin’s wife, Krupskaia, for the abusive language that Stalin had used against her in public. Krupskaia had criticized Stalin for what she saw as Stalin’s bypassing Lenin’s authority, but Stalin always argued that, given Lenin’s health, Lenin should not bear any burden of Soviet politics.

**Lenin’s Funeral:** When Lenin died on January 21, 1924, Leon Trotsky was vacationing in the Caucasus to recover from ill-health. Stalin telegraphed Trotsky not to interrupt his convalescence to return to Moscow because Lenin himself had said that he did not want his funeral to be a major production. But in fact Stalin made sure that Lenin’s funeral was a national memorial, and that, as especially represented by Trotsky’s absence that he, Stalin, would be represented as Lenin’s successor. Stalin saw to it that Lenin’s body was embalmed and enshrined in a Lenin Mausoleum in Red Square. Lenin was canonized as the successor to Karl Marx, or as Stalin put it, “Leninism is Marxism in the age of imperialism.” And Stalin asserted himself at Lenin’s funeral with a series of succinct pledges to carry out the legacy of Lenin, each beginning with “We Swear to thee Comrade Lenin,” in which he, Stalin represented himself as the new voice of the party.

**Stalin and Trotsky Biography and Ideology**

**Biography of Stalin:** Joseph Stalin (1879-1953), born Iosif Djugazhvilli, was the son of a cobbler in the village of Gori near the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. He was enrolled in an Orthodox Seminary in Tbilisi by his mother in 1893, but was expelled after six years in 1899 for disseminating Marxist socialist ideas. He then joined the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, and sided with the Bolshevik faction of Lenin from the outset, beginning with the Bolshevik-Menshevik split at the Second Party Congress in 1903. At first, he adopted the revolutionary name “Koba” (the Indomitable in Georgian), and then later “Stalin” (Man of Steel in Russian). An efficient organizer and willing to undertake the rough side of revolutionary politics — several train robberies in 1907 as “expropriation raids” to secure party funds — Lenin was quick to realize Stalin’s role as a wheel-horse of party operations. Stalin published his first theoretical work Marxism and the National Question in 1912, and was appointed to party Central Committee in the same year. The style of Stalin’s first work of rhetorical question and answer exemplified his seminary education and would serve as the writing model of the rest of his future works.
Stalin played a significant role in the Russian Civil War as a political commissar, and with the Red Army commander Klimet Voroshilov helped to defeat the White Guard forces of Denikin at the Battle of Tsaritsyn in August of 1919. Stalin was promoted to the position of party General Secretary at the Eleventh Party Congress (27 March-2 April, 1922), and in conjunction with his role on the party Control Commission (responsible for admissions and expulsions) and the party Organizational Bureau (responsible for placing party members in government posts), Stalin consolidated his power base in both the party and state apparatus, and most importantly in the Communist Party Central Committee and Politburo. In 1922-1923, Stalin was in charge of a massive party purge, ordered by Lenin at the Tenth Party Congress (8-16 March, 21), which expelled 150,000 party members from a then national membership of 750,000. Thus already by 1923, the all-Union party membership was mostly composed of Stalin’s supporters.

While Lenin before his death recognized the potential of Stalin’s power base within the party, the other members of the Politburo were curiously oblivious to such a political threat. They seemed to see the position of General Secretary of the Communist Party as something of a strictly administrative post. The other members of the Politburo were more interested in the posts which they deemed to be the real positions of political power: the Chairman of the Council of Ministers for Aleksei Rykov, the Head of the Trade Unions for Mikhail Tomsky, and the Head of the Petrograd and Moscow Communist Party organizations for Grigorii Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev.

The one member of the Politburo who was suspected by all as most likely to reach for a total power was Leon Trotsky. On the one hand, Trotsky had accumulated enormous power as Commissar of War, he was also by far the most charismatic orator, and, finally, he seemed to take a superiority attitude and aloofness to the other Politburo members as the singularly gifted revolutionary theorist due to a superior intellectual background. And, as will be elaborated below, Trotsky’s specific revolutionary theory was generally unpopular with the rank-and-file of the general Communist Party membership. Fear of Trotsky rising to supreme power as a “Soviet Bonaparte” led most other Communist Party leaders to prevent Lenin’s amended testament calling for the replacement of Stalin as General Secretary was not read to the rest of the top party membership at the Twelfth Party Congress (17-25 April, 1923).

Stalin and Revolutionary Theory: Beyond his writing on the nationality question, Stalin’s first major work in the pronouncement of revolutionary theory was enunciated in a series of lectures he gave at Sverdlovsk University in Ekaterinburg, which in their ensemble were published as the Stalinist work, The Foundations of Leninism. The key theme was a Leninist defense of “socialism in one country.”

Stalin drew upon Lenin to develop two critical themes regarding socialism in one country: first, that a single country could survive on its own against world imperialist encirclement; and secondly, that Soviet Russia was a model of that single socialist country in being the “weakest link” of the capitalist world system that snapped under the wartime military hardship and economic deprivation. Lenin himself never directly addressed Stalin’s proposition of a “weakest link,” but Lenin did directly declare that socialism might first emerge in a single country in his work Several Theses, written in 1915. And while writing at the time, Lenin implicitly connected the reality of socialism in a single country with a concomitant promoting of a worldwide socialist revolution; Lenin by his very action in signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918 and the Treaty of Riga in 1921 to save a “healthy Bolshevik baby” against an adventurous attempt to promote a world Communist revolution did directly point to the proposition of the successful survival of socialism in a single country (Soviet Russia) absent the spontaneous emergence of a worldwide socialist revolution.

Stalin’s defense of the proposition of socialism in one country was highly supported by both the party membership and the general Soviet civic body. It provided a rationale for all the sacrifices the country had endured in the Russia Civil War; and, at the same time, it appealed to Russian national pride in proclaiming that the Soviet state was the master of its own destiny as opposed to a contingent existence of a worldwide Communist revolution.
**Biography of Leon Trotsky:** Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), born Leon Bronstein, grew up in a prosperous Jewish farming family in the Ukraine. His university education made him, along with Lenin, one of the most educated Russian Marxist revolutionary theorists. Trotsky spoke fluent French, was widely traveled, and as a charismatic orator was seen to by the heart of the Bolshevik revolution. But in fact Trotsky did not join the Bolshevik organization of the Russian Marxist movement until he returned to Russia in July 1917 from political exile in the West. Formerly, Trotsky had led his own Marxist faction in Russia called the Mezhraiontsy (those in “Between” the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks). But Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks upon his return to Russia in July 1917 because he was convinced that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had the will and capacity to undertake the immediate seizure of socialist power in Russia.

**Trotsky and Revolutionary Theory:** Trotsky played a major role in the political organization of the Soviets in the Russian Revolution of 1905, and issued the revolutionary call for “no tsar but a workers’ government,” as a call for Soviet power to immediately take the 1905 Russian Revolution into socialism, bypassing any further state of capitalist development. In a lengthy pamphlet published in 1906 entitled Our Revolution: Programs and Prospects, Trotsky set forth his Marxist theoretical justification of bypassing any further state of capitalist development by appealing to the writing of Marx and Engels in their Address to the Central Authority of the Communist League in 1850 regarding revolutionary strategy for what was seen as potential resurgence of revolutionary activity in Germany following the liberal uprising of 1848-49.

In arguing that the workers’ by their very class interest must look beyond capitalist rule to socialist rule for economic emancipation through political emancipation, Marx and Engels declared that workers must not give in to a permanent alliance with the petty bourgeoisie for petty bourgeois capitalist reforms, e.g., a ten-hour workday, a progressive income tax, and national workshops, but must “make the [democratic] revolution permanent” in the total abolition of capitalist rule, lest the majoritarian class interest of the proletariat be sacrificed to capitalist exploitation. And furthermore, that such a socialist revolution in any given country must also spread to worldwide socialist revolutions, so that “competition among the proletarians in these countries has ceased,” that is, that an international socialist class consciousness prevail over any national class consciousness that might drive the working-classes of the world into international conflict among one another.

Hence, Trotsky called for “permanent revolution” in a twofold sense: first, that the bourgeois democratic revolution in a given country must immediately transition into a socialist revolution; and secondly, that the socialist revolution in any given country must immediately transition to a worldwide socialist revolution.

Beyond the question of a backup worldwide socialist revolution, Trotsky’s notion of permanent revolution was at odds with the NEP program (New Economic Policy) adopted by Lenin at the Tenth Party Congress (8-16, 1921) in two notable ways. On the one hand, Trotsky distrusted the capitalist land ownership of the whole of the Russian peasantry, that is, the poor peasantry and the middle peasantry as well as the rich peasantry. As such, Trotsky was inimical to any agricultural program like NEP that would appeal to the capitalist instinct of the poor peasantry. And, insofar as NEP would allow the poor peasant to sell the bulk of his produce harvested from his household lot on the open market; and the more the capitalist consciousness or “kukalization” of the poor peasantry would be encouraged and prompt the poor peasantry to support a complete capitalist counterrevolution to Soviet socialist political rule.

By the same token, Trotsky argued that the parceling out of the land into small 14 to 20 acre individual peasant households would promote labor-intensive farming where the bulk of the agricultural produce and agricultural labor would stay on the countryside instead of being available to an urban working-class in large-scale industrialization. Trotsky concluded that the only solution to both the political and economic security of Bolshevik Communist rule was the establishment of large-scale collectivized agriculture (the nature of which will be treated below).
NEP and the Building of Socialism

The Status of the Soviet Economy under NEP, 1921-1927: The NEP program was designed to end the food crisis for the cities. The crisis has been exacerbated by a major drought in 1921 throughout Russia that included the agricultural rich Ukraine and the Volga region. Estimates of deaths from starvation in 1921 and 1922 due to the drought and a low peasant incentive to produce run from 8 million to 20 million people. Noteworthy, the United States under an International Food Relief Administration headed by Herbert Hoover provided the significant assistance to prevent the food crisis from being even worse. However, a bumper crop in 1922 turned the food shortage around.

In addition to allowing the peasantry to sell their produce on the open market, the NEP program, adopted at the Tenth Party Congress in 1921, had reduced the compulsory state deliveries from 25% to 15%. This meant that by 1922 that the peasantry was selling large quantities of food stuffs on the open market bringing the food crisis to an end. Likewise, industrial factories, relieved of the overwhelming emphasis of wartime production, began to produce agricultural implements and consumer goods for economic exchange with the countryside and began to show significant state industrial turnover capital from domestic agricultural-industrial trade. The state industrial turnover profits under the state industrial planning organ VSENKHA (the Supreme Council of the People’s Economy) were then invested in restoring into operation numerous factories that had been rendered dysfunctional by the requirements of wartime communism from 1918 to 1921.

The restoration of such pre-existing industrial enterprises could be accomplished fairly cheaply because it only required the new investment of repair capital. Hence, by 1927 the Soviet Union had reached its prewar 1914 output in both agricultural and industrial production. But during the 1920 the question became how would the state acquire new more costly start-up capital for a higher investment rate needed for the expansion of new heavy industrial production, that is, whole new industrial installations for the output of steel, coal, petroleum, electricity, and transportation-communication. Such expanded industrial installations would most certainly be required for a more powerful industrial-military complex that would certainly be required to meet the need of national security against imperialist encirclement from a hostile capitalist world. This would necessarily require a massive transformation of agricultural production to achieve a much higher rate of state turnover profit from agricultural exchange and a massive transformation of the agricultural population to the cities to provide for a required ever expanding industrial labor force.

Nikolai Bukharin and the “Equilibrium Theory”: Nikolai Bukharin had emerged as the paramount revolutionary theorist defending the NEP program. On June 2, 1924, Bukharin was promoted to full membership on the Politburo. Bukharin set forth was came to be known as his equilibrium theory to defend the program of NEP against the charge, especially of Trotsky, that it would lead to the kulakization of the whole of the peasantry into peasant capitalists and engender a counterrevolutionary mindset in the peasantry against Bolshevik socialist political power, and concomitantly serve as a barrier to expanded industrialization.

Bukharin argued that system and environment must be accord, meaning that the system of large-scale collectivized socialist agriculture – as opposed to private household marking farming – could only be achieved when the environment of a proper consciousness of socialist collectivized agriculture emerged with the poor peasantry for such a transformation. Bukharin argued that capitalist commercial competition among the peasantry in a market economy under NEP, after restrictions against the leasing of land and the hiring of labor was abolished in 1923, would ultimately lead to class conflict on countryside between the rich peasantry and the poor peasantry. Such a class conflict on the countryside would naturally evolve insofar as the poor peasantry lacking the agricultural implements and entrepreneurial skills of the rich peasantry would fall into impoverishment and the status of hired labor of the rich peasantry.

At this point, the poor peasantry, as the overwhelming majority of the peasant population, would be ready to consolidate their smaller household plots into large-scale socialist collectives (kolkhozy) with the promise of being supplied with the proper machinery by the state to successfully conduct such large-scale socialist agricultural operations. In their socialist capacity the socialist collectives would agree to sell their product solely to the state at state prices. The state prices in return would be set at a much lower level than under NEP to allow the state an
ever greater turnover capital obtained from selling the grain on the foreign market and cheaper wages paid to urban labor proportionate to a reduced cost of urban foodstuffs. The large-scale more efficient collectivized agriculture on the part of the poor peasantry would soon drive kulak agriculture to the wall and force the total collectivization of Soviet agriculture. And concomitantly, the more efficient large-scale collectives would release a large part of the agricultural population to urban industrial employment necessary for expanded industrial production from the capital investment gained from a higher state industrial turnover profits.

Bukharin went on to argue, that surplus grain produced by the kulak under private commercial market farming would provide the state with a sufficient capital turnover – from state requisitions and state purchases – to begin the process of industrial expansion even before the collectivization of agriculture. Thus, in the words of Bukharin even under NEP the Soviet state was already building socialism, if only at a “snail’s pace” but it was still “building socialism” under NEP and would “continue to build it.” And to this end both to engender the poor peasant collectivization of agriculture and rich peasant acquisitions to the state, Bukharin called for the rich peasant to “get rich” (enrichez vous) under NEP. Bukharin advanced his equilibrium theory as a classic movement of the dialectic: the capitalist kulak consciousness of NEP would lead to what it is not, a socialist collectivized consciousness, by engendering the economic exploitation of the poor peasantry.

Bukharin and the Political Right against Trotsky and the Political Left

Bukharin and the Political Right: Bukharin’s equilibrium theory and NEP came to be endorsed as the official Bolshevik Communist agricultural program for Soviet Russia in the mid-twenties, and was officially announced to be so at the Soviet Fourteenth Party Congress (18-31 December, 1925). It was seen to nicely conform to the proposition of socialism-in-one country because it was underpinned by the Soviet economic recovery to pre-war Russian industrial production by 1927; and it tended to uphold the principle of socialism in one country even under NEP, and was also advanced at time of relative success of Soviet foreign policy under Narkomindel’ (see below). Bukharin’s chief support on the Soviet Politburo for his equilibrium theory and the natural evolution of NEP into socialist collectivized agriculture was that of Rykov and Tomsky, and also, for the time being, by Stalin. The four became identified as a “political right” in support of the domestic economic status quo under NEP and the foreign political status quo in the normalization of political relations with the capitalist world, while a “political left” of Trotsky, soon to be joined by Zinoviev, and Kamenev, was opposed to both NEP and the normalization of political relations with the Western World.

Trotsky and the Political Left: Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution rejected any comprise with the capitalist market instinct of the peasantry. He argued that the poor peasantry instead of being driven to collectivist socialist consciousness in economic deprivation under NEP would instead become more and more entrenched in kulak capitalist economic consciousness. So much so, that the poor peasantry would eventually combine with the kulak to overthrow Bolshevik socialist political rule. Likewise, drawing on the economic thought of Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, the head of Gosplan (the “State Planning Commission” established in 1922 to deal with the long-range economic requirement of start-up capital for expanded industrialization), Trotsky argued that the industrial-military requirement to defend the Soviet state against imperialist encirclement could not await expanded Soviet industrialization “at a snail’s pace” as advanced by Bukharin.

Indeed, Trotsky argued that the enrichment of the kulak was not even leading to socialism at a snail’s pace, but only a “scissors crisis” in Soviet Russia, that is, an inverted higher price that the kulak would demand from the state for his produce as a opposed to a lower price that the kulak would be willing to pay to the state in exchange for consumer goods and farm machinery. This would mean that the state would not only have to pay a higher price to the kulak for grain deliveries but a higher subsistence wage to workers, while receiving less in its exchange price for consumer goods. And this would certainly deprive the state of the necessary turnover capital for any significant level of industrial growth, and even tend to provoke an urban food crisis like under war communism. Finally, Trotsky also argued that labor intensive household peasant farming could never release the necessary urban working population for any significant level of industrial growth.
Drawing on the Gosplan projections, Preobrazhenskii, Trotsky argued that beyond the political consideration of the “kukalization” of the peasantry, the only real economic basis for Soviet industrial growth was the immediate collectivization of agriculture, and if necessary by force. The small peasant household plots would be enclosed into large-scale socialist agricultural combines of some 1,200 acres, with machinery to release a large part of the peasant labor force to urban industry. The state would provide the machinery to mechanize agricultural production in return for which the agricultural collectives (kolkhozy) would have to sell their grain to the state at sufficiently low state prices to provide the necessary turnover capital for large-scale industrialization. And collectivization would also engender in the peasantry as toilers (trudiaushchisya) a more political collective labor consciousness in working together to produce agriculturally for the state as opposed to individually for a private market.

By way of contrast, the political right argued that the very notion of the forced collectivization of agriculture would violate the underlying Leninist premise of NEP as necessary to maintain a smychka (alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry) to successfully retain political power.

But Trotsky went on to further argue that even with accelerated industrialization, the real foundation of Soviet national security was the spread of a world communist revolution to the West. And to foment the spread of world communism the Communist International (Comintern) had been established in March 1919 under Lenin’s own authority to promote such Communist revolutions in the West under the Russian model of a Soviet socialist state. As such, Trotsky argued that socialism in one country was essentially not a viable political proposition because, while the collectivization of agriculture in Soviet Russia would help to promote the immediate survival of socialism in Soviet Russia alone, only a world revolution would make possible the permanent survival of socialism in Soviet Russia as part of a world socialist system. Trotsky’s ideological views were shared by Zinoviev as head of the Comintern, but for reasons of personal power Zinoviev was not prepared, early on, to politically align with Trotsky. Another major supporter of Trotsky was Karl Radek, the then editor of Pravda.

Stalin as Member of the ‘Triumvirs’ in the Struggle Against Trotsky

The ‘Triumvirs:’ After the death of Lenin, Stalin, and Zinoviev, born Ovsei Radomys’skii (1883-1936), and Kamenev, born Lev Rosenfeld (1883-1936), immediately combined to form a political coterie called the “Triumvirs.” In fact, Stalin’s position on the secure viability of socialism in one country did not correspond to Zinoviev’s position on world revolution as the real basis of survival of socialism in Russia, but the alliance of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev was seen to be one of necessary political convenience to block the power of Trotsky. And the Triumvirs represented a formidable constellation of power with Stalin as General Secretary of the Communist Party and Zinoviev and Kamenev as the heads of the Petrograd and Moscow Communist Party organizations respectively. Trotsky’s political struggle with the Triumvirs was based in a controversy over revolutionary doctrine.

Trotsky’s Critique of the Political Status Quo: On December 11, 1923, Trotsky published an article in Pravda entitled “The New Course.” The theme was that the Soviet Communist Party had come to be dominated by a self-interested bureaucratic apparatus more interested in their privileged political positions than carrying out the ideological imperatives of collectivization and world revolution. Here Trotsky cited an impending “scissors crisis” in which peasant agricultural production under NEP which would hold the state hostage for higher prices thwarting the necessary state gain in turnover capital to support accelerated industrialization; and likewise, the failure of the Comintern under Zinoviev to act decisively to foster a Communist revolution in Germany in 1923 (see below), lest it invite a military response of the Western powers against the Soviet state. Trotsky concluded that drawing back from the collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union and the sponsorship of a world Communist revolution in the West would lead to the demise of the Soviet Communist state.

To most party regulars Trotsky’s critique ideologically undermined the theme of “socialism in one country” which was seen to have been advanced by Lenin himself in his acceptance of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk of 1918 and the Treaty of Riga of 1921 and in Lenin’s own call for the introduction of NEP. And perhaps even more importantly it was seen to be “adventurist” in calling for risky political policies that threatened the continued existence of the Soviet Socialist state and with it the very political “careers” of rank-and-file party members that Trotsky condemned.
of personal opportunism. As such, the rank-and-file of the party membership felt far more comfortable with Stalin’s defense of “socialism in one country” set forth in Stalin’s 1924 work, *The Foundations of Leninism.*

**The Action of Zinoviev and Kamenev against Trotsky**: Zinoviev and Kamenev immediately reacted to Trotsky’s critique which they saw as being principally directed toward their leadership roles on the Soviet Politburo by charging Trotsky with promoting “factionalism” within the Communist Party, a deviation which Lenin had also condemned at the Tenth Party Congress in 1921. And after being warned at a special party conference (16-18 January, 1924), Trotsky at first publicly recanted at the Soviet Thirteenth Party Congress (23-31, May 1924) at which Trotsky declared: “My party – right or wrong – I know one cannot be right against the party … for history has not created other ways for what is right.” But Trotsky’s recantation was short-lived, because in November 1924 Trotsky published another article in *Pravda* (recall that the editor of *Pravda* was Karl Radek, Trotsky’s disciple) entitled “Lessons of October” (presumably to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution). Here Trotsky reiterated the same theme of a lack of revolutionary boldness, except this time Trotsky specifically mentioned Zinoviev and Kamenev as examples who on October 16, 1917 (O.S.) opposed the singular Bolshevik seizure of political power of October 25, 1917 (O.S.), pending authorization by a Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets scheduled to meet the following day on October 26, 1917 (O.S.).

Zinoviev and Kamenev were incensed and called for Trotsky’s immediate expulsion from the party at a Party Conference (27-29, April, 1925). Stalin intervened, however, and proposed that Trotsky only be removed from his position as Commissar of War. Instead of using his favor in the Red Army to fight his removal, Trotsky willingly accepted his removal, which he later argued he saw as an opportunity to get rid of the image of being a Soviet Napoleon. At the same time, Trotsky remained adamant in his opposition to NEP on the domestic front and the sacrifice of world revolution on the foreign policy front as policies to safeguard socialism-in-one-country.

**The Breakup of the Triumvirs**

**The New “Left Opposition”:** After the removal of Trotsky as Commissar of War the political alliance of Stalin with Zinoviev and Kamenev soon fell apart. From an ideological standpoint, Zinoviev himself, as head of the Comintern actually shared Trotsky’s commitment to promote world revolution, even at the expense of promoting Western intervention to destroy the Soviet state. Likewise, Zinoviev shared Trotsky’s position on the need for an immediate campaign to collectivize agriculture in the Soviet Union, if necessary by force, both for reasons of expanded industrialization and to thwart any further kolkalization of the peasantry. In this, Zinoviev was supported by Kamenev as his trusted friend and ally, and, as such, both ideologically belonged to the political left as a left opposition of a Trotskyist ideological persuasion in the Soviet Politburo. The immediate opposition of Zinoviev and Kamenev to Trotsky was only seeing Trotsky as threat to achieving supreme political power as a Soviet Napoleon, but by 1925 Zinoviev and Kamenev had come to see that they were more in political accord with Trotsky, and needed to seek a new political alliance with Trotsky in opposition to their former Triumvir Stalin.

Stalin, on the other hand, had not supported an attempted “Brandler putsch” to achieve a Communist revolution in Germany (which Zinoviev as head of the Comintern eventually did come to support – see below) at the expense of positive Soviet foreign policy relations with Germany. And, on the other hand, Stalin was not yet ready to risk Bolshevik power as underpinned by the smychka alliance with the peasantry under the terms of NEP with a program to immediately promote the forceful collectivization of agriculture. And in this, Stalin recognized himself as part of the “political right” with Rykov, Tomskii, and Bukharin – an alliance that Stalin could powerfully support after his promotion form General Secretary to First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in 1923, and his new appoints to the Communist Party apparatus following the first great Party purge in 1922-1923.

**Stalin’s Campaign Against Zinoviev:** Stalin launched his campaign against Zinoviev and the political left by destroying his principal base of power as the head of the Leningrad Party organization (Petrograd was renamed Leningrad in 1924 in honor of Lenin). In May 1925, Stalin ordered the removal of certain top members of the Leningrad Party organization who were supporters of Zinoviev; and later in the same year Stalin moved in the same fashion against Kamenev’s leadership of the Moscow Party organization. And it was only at this point, that Zinoviev...
and Kamenev realized that they had to turn to directly to a new political alliance with Trotsky against the political right of Stalin, Rykov, Tomskii, and Bukharin.

Zinoviev did this in the fall of 1925 by authoring a work entitled “Leninism” in which he argued that Lenin had always envisioned NEP as a very short-term “tactical retreat” from socialism, as opposed to integral program moving to its own dialectical development of collectivized Soviet agriculture, as Bukharin’s equilibrium theory would have it. Zinoviev went to argue that the kulak had already gained so much power in the countryside that as a peasant minority the kulak would have the power to strangle Soviet socialism by, in the words of Trotsky, holding “the cities hostage,” that is, precipitating a food crisis like under war communism. Zinoviev therefore, like Trotsky, concluded that the NEP program must be terminated and immediately replaced by the socialist collectivization of agriculture.

Stalin responded by a further purge of the Leningrad Party organization in January 1926, this time under his most trusted lieutenant in the Party Secretariat, Viacheslav Molotov, and this time Zinoviev was removed from his formal post as Chairman of the Leningrad party organization. Within a month, Molotov reported that 96% of the Leningrad Party organization had joined the “Stalinist majority.” The Stalinist majority referred to Stalin and the three other members of the Politburo who supported Stalin – Rykov, Tomsky, and Bukharin – as four of the seven members of the Politburo in opposition to Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev. Later in 1926 a further “cleaning up” of the Leningrad party organization was handed to a new Stalinist rising lieutenant, Sergei Kirov. To enforce his clean-up, Kirov had at his disposal the newly reorganized Soviet secret police, formerly called the Cheka and after 1924 called the Unified State Political Administration (OGPU) then headed by Vladimir Menzhinskii who replaced Felix Dzerzhinskii who died in 1926.

The Isolation of the “Left Opposition” from Power: By April 1926, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Trotsky had formed a direct political alliance (along with the support of Karl Radek), which was publically recognized, and politically stigmatized by Stalin, as a “factionalist left-opposition” against Stalin’s own majority support in the Politburo. Using his position as First Secretary, Stalin first had Zinoviev expelled from the Politburo in July 1926; and then Trotsky and Kamenev also expelled from the Politburo in October 1926. Zinoviev was also replaced by Bukharin as head of the Comintern in October 1926.

The three were then replaced three of Stalin’s loyal lieutenants: Mikhail Kalinin who had replaced Yakov Sverdlov as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet; Klimet Voroshilov who had replaced Trotsky as Commissar of War (after a brief six-month stint and rather mysterious death of Mikhail Frunze) and Viacheslav Molotov, who as a member of the Party Secretariat had served Stalin well in the Leningrad purge. By the end of 1926, the Politburo was composed of an all-Stalinist membership, and the military was under the command of the Stalinist crony, Voroshilov, dating back to the defense of Tsaritsyn in 1919. A final showdown between Stalinist political rule and the left opposition occurred in conjunction with Soviet foreign policy in the 1920s, to which we now turn.

The Komintern and Narkomindel

The Relation Between Domestic and International Politics: The Stalin-Trotsky dispute which came to include Zinoviev and Kamenev existed in the context of both domestic and international politics. And Soviet domestic and international politics existed in a complex and at times conflicting relation between domestic and international politics. To understand this complex and at times conflicting relation between Soviet domestic and international politics it is necessary to understand the different functions of the two institutions of Soviet foreign policy: The Komintern as the Communist International (Kommunistisches Internationale) and the Narkomindel as the People’s Commissariat of International Affairs (Narodnyi Komissariat Inostrannyk del), as the People’s Commissariat of International Affairs).
The Komintern: The Communist International (Komunisticheskii International) was established in March 1919 with a two-fold ideological orientation. First, as proclaimed by Lenin in his April Theses of 1917, the Comintern was to serve as a worldwide institutional basis to establish correct Leninist orthodoxy on the political nature of the Marxist socialist state. Correct Leninist political orthodoxy was founded on the doctrine of the Soviet socialist model of the Commune-type of state, which, as self-acting bodies, was the self-defined model of socialist majoritarian class rule, and which, in turn, was the self-defined model of irreversible popular democratic rule. Hence, the Soviet socialist model was counter-posed to bureaucratic state of western-style parliamentary democracy, in which the purported principle of the democratic rotation of different political majorities was contradicted by an independent police and military to enforce ongoing capitalist minoritarian class rule.

As such, Communist Party membership in the Comintern was to be distinguished from Social-Democratic Labor Party membership in the Second International, which still subscribed to the principles of western-style parliamentary democracy. Comintern membership had to denounce western-style parliamentary democracy with its purported principle of the democratic rotation of majorities in power as a subterfuge for the reality of an independent police and military established to protect ongoing capitalist minority class rule. Likewise, Communist Party member in the Comintern was to be subordinate to the Bolshevik principle of “democratic centralism” calling for the universal enforcement of orthodoxy and discipline from the top down, precluding any form of factionalism in open public dissent from Central Committee and Politburo policy. To guard against any deviation from centralized orthodoxy and discipline, periodic purges were to be conducted of Comintern Communist party memberships.

Secondly, it was incumbent on all Communist Party memberships belonging to the Comintern to support the foreign policy interest of the Russian Soviet Socialist state as their first basis of political loyalty. The Russian Soviet Socialist state was to be seen to be both the model and the world base of socialism, that is, as the type and anchor of promoting world-wide Communism from its existing status of socialism-in-one country. In effect, this required Comintern Communist Party memberships to swear allegiance to a foreign power, or what from a national standpoint would be seen as political sedition.

The headquarters of the Comintern was established in Moscow, and Zinoviev acted as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern until his removal in October 1926. Under Zinoviev the Comintern set forth Moscow’s Twenty-One Demands in 1921, (the substance of which has been set forth above) as the formal requirements for Communist Party membership in the Comintern. As such, admission to the Comintern was to constitute the first great purge of Marxist Social-Democratic Parties belonging to the Second International in line with the establishment of the Russian Soviet Socialist state.

Those of the Second International who were prepared to submit to Moscow’s twenty-one demands became inscribed as Communist Parties of the Comintern. This meant that they had to turn their backs on western-style parliamentary democracy and their own nation-states as the first priority of their foreign policy commitment and effectively submit themselves to Russian Bolshevik authority in designing their revolutionary policy. Those who were not willing to turn away from western-style parliamentary democracy and their own nation-states as the first priority of their foreign policy commitment not only stayed within the membership of the existing Second International and retained the name of Social-Democratic Parties. As a result, the membership of newly established Communist Parties of the Comintern labeled the membership of the Social-Democratic Parties of the Second International as “renegade opportunists”; while the membership of the Social-Democratic Parties of the Second International labeled the members of the Communist Parties of the Second International as “stooges of Moscow.”

Throughout most of the next five decades the two Marxist organizations became the bitterest of political enemies. (For a most notable account of this long-term development and sudden change in France in the 1960s, see my chapter “The Evolution of the P.C.F” in Communism and Political Systems in Western Europe, edited by David Albright, Boulder COLO: Westview Press, 1979). Here it is to be observed that the Comintern (which formally lasted until 1943), was seen in the eyes of the western world as a subversive conspiracy promoted by Moscow to not only subvert true parliamentary government but also to act as an instrument of the Soviet Union’s particular national foreign interests to protect socialism in one country. But this presented a somewhat ambivalent picture of another side of Soviet foreign policy as represented by the functioning of its People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.
Narkomindel': By way of contrast to the Comintern as an instrument to promote world revolution, the Soviet Union established its People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (Narkomindel’) to establish normal diplomatic relations with western capitalist government beneficial to its own national security interests. When questioned about a dichotomy between respect for the political sovereignty of existing capitalist governments in the quest to establish normal diplomatic relations and the quest for their revolutionary overthrow of existing capitalist governments, the Soviet government responded as follows: As a government the Soviet government respected the political sovereignty of all other governments in the international system; the Comintern, on the other hand, was an international organization of private Communist parties which had the right to determine their own political policy. And as such, the Russian Soviet government was no more responsible than all other governments for the political behavior of private Communist Parties in their own countries.

With this political sleight-of-hand, Soviet foreign policy under its official government status as the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, in contradistinction to the Comintern, sought to establish normal diplomatic relations with western capitalist governments to secure Soviet state security in trade and military relations to safeguard socialism-in-one country. To this end, after successfully surviving the Russian Civil War, the Soviet government reconstituted its foreign policy office on very different basis from the motley delegation that signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Foreign policy professionals were recruited to staff The People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Most notably, this began with appointment of Grigorii Chicherin, to succeed Trotsky as the new Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Chicherin, who spoke several foreign languages, headed a staff that were well-versed in the complexity and norms of international diplomacy. As Lenin put it, “when we deal with the bourgeoisie we go as merchants.”

Soviet Relations with Germany, 1922-1923

The Rapallo Pact: Germany was a natural target of opportunity for Soviet foreign policy in the early 1920s, because under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles Germany was pretty much treated as a political pariah by the Entente Powers, much like Soviet Russia. The Soviet government seized upon Germany as a target of opportunity at an international conference in Genoa, Italy in the spring of 1922. The conference was called by the Entente Powers to determine the final sum of individual reparations payments to be imposed upon Germany as required by the terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty. Russia as a co-belligerent before Soviet political rule was invited to attend to present her own wartime claims against Germany.

While the officials of the Entente Powers were in Geneva discussing the exact financial settlement they would impose on Germany, the Soviet officials, led by Chicherin, met with their German counterparts at Rapallo, a resort site outside of the city of Genoa. Alone together, the two delegations arrived at the following settlement: first, the two parties agreed to mutual recognition of one another’s governments (Soviet Russia and Weimar Germany) and the establishment of normal diplomatic and trade relations; secondly, the Soviet government would cancel all wartime claims against Germany in return for German forgiveness of prewar Tsarist debts contracted with Germany before the outbreak of the war; and thirdly, a secret clause provided for Germany to train German military officers on Soviet soil in contravention of the disarmament terms imposed on Germany by the Versailles Peace Treaty.

The Rapallo Pact took the Entente Powers by complete surprise and represented a spectacular political coup for Soviet diplomacy. Gaining political recognition by Germany meant that the western powers, especially France and Great Britain, could no longer isolate Soviet Russia as a political target for counterrevolution. And it likewise meant that the more the Entente Powers tried to circumscribe German power, the more Germany was likely to cozy up to Soviet Russia. Still more it meant that the Soviet government would apply the same logic of its mutual cancellation of economic claims with Germany to the other western powers. Namely, the Soviet government would claim that prewar Tsarist debts with Great Britain, the United States, and especially France (the heaviest lender to pre-war Tsarist Russia) were to be equitably cancelled out by the damage they caused to Soviet Russia in their support of the White Guard in the Russian Civil War.
The “Ruhr Crisis”: Despite the bilateral Rapallo settlement between Soviet Russia and Weimar Germany, the Entente Powers insisted on imposing heavy war indemnities against Germany, most notably the unrealistic indemnity of 33 billion francs demanded by France. In early 1923, Germany simply defaulted on her payments to France, and the French government exercised an option provided by the Versailles Treaty to send military occupation troops into the industrial Ruhr region of Germany to take out redemption payments in goods-in-kind. The German industrial workers sat down on the job in defiance of the French action. The German government in turn encouraged the Ruhr workers in their resistance by continuing to pay their wages by simply printing more money. This led to runaway inflation in Germany in 1923 to the extent that the German mark, normally circulating on a 4 to 1 ratio with the American dollar, devalued to 4,000,000 to 1 by mid-1923. The devaluation rendering the German mark virtually worthless wreaked havoc on personal savings and pensions and threw the whole country into a revolutionary state of mind.

The extreme right led by a Frei Korps called for a unified national front to drive the French troops out of Germany; while the extreme left, headed by a large German Communist Party led by Heinrich Brandler waited on instructions from the Comintern headquarters in Moscow. The German Communist Party in the wake of the economic meltdown had already gained political majorities in the state legislatures of Saxony and Thuringia as two states strategically located in the center of Germany. The Soviet Communist Politburo waivered. Revolutionary internationalists like Trotsky and Zinoviev saw the situation in Germany as an opportune moment to seize political-military power in the states of Saxony and Thuringia and then use the two states as a base of Communist power to promote a Communist takeover in all of Germany. Others, especially Stalin, saw such an attempt as a high risk venture, which if it failed would undermine Soviet-German political solidarity that had been so carefully crafted by the Rapallo Pact.

The Brandler Putsch and Its Outcomes: In 1923, Stalin had not yet consolidated his personal power as General Secretary, and the Comintern under Zinoviev ordered Brandler to attempt a Communist takeover in the whole of Germany. What came to be called the “Brandler putsch” failed miserably. National German government forces not only had no difficulty in quickly suppressing Communist paramilitary forces but immediately chased the Communists from political power in the state legislatures of Saxony and Thuringia. And what came to become a common Soviet practice, the Soviet sponsored influence in the Comintern was blamed on Heinrich Brandler who was accused of “failing to properly understand and execute Comintern policy” and was purged as a deviant “left-wing adventurist,” that is, a pre-mature attempt at a nation-wide Communist revolution in Germany (even though it was actually ordered by the Soviet-led Comintern). Such blame projection was to become a common practice in the Soviet-led Comintern.

Worse still, the attempted Brandler coup did undermine Soviet-German relations. Recognizing the volatile political situation in Germany under runaway inflation, the United States took the leadership in instituting the “Dawes Plan” in 1924 which scaled down annual German redemption payments to a manageable level. Likewise, the United States undertook large-scale investment in the German economy, which led to a remarkable German economic recovery in the mid-1920s. Germany, in turn, responded by seemingly abjuring its more aggressive political-military past (except for new established right-wing fringe parties like the National Socialist German Workers’ Party or Nazi Party headed by Adolph Hitler). Under Gustav Stresemann as German Foreign Minister in the latter 1920s, Germany sought a policy of “western fulfilment.”

On the other hand, Soviet relations with the Weimar government cooled after the attempted Brandler putsch. But the two government continued to maintain normal diplomatic relations and a profitable trade relation – Soviet raw materials for German industrial products, along with the continued training of German officers on Soviet soil near Moscow. And here it should be noted that the officer corps of the new Red Army benefited greatly from an advisory role provided by German military officers. Soviet relations with France and Great Britain improved in the mid-1920s, as Great Britain and France accepted the reality of Soviet Russian rule and both recognized the Soviet government in 1923 and 1924 respectively and established normal diplomatic relations; and both countries accepted the same mutual cancellation of debt claims as did Germany. Only the United States steadfastly throughout the 1920s refused to recognize the Russian Soviet government: first for ideological reasons in seeing Marxism-Leninism as the antithesis of the most fundamental American values of capitalism and religion; secondly,
because it saw the Comintern as an *instrument of foreign sedition* sponsored by Moscow, and thirdly, because such large industrial enterprises as *Standard Oil and International Harvester* had seen their Russian capital assets nationalized without compensation.

**Soviet Relations with China, 1925-1927**

**The Political Setting in China:** In the early 1920s, political and military dismemberment prevailed in China. China had been subject to western political and economic encroachment throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century under a decaying *Manchus dynasty*. The principle players in western imperialism in Mainland China were Great Britain, Germany, Tsarist Russia, and Japan. The United States came to play its own role in declaring an “Open Door” policy at the turn of the twentieth century under its Secretary of State *John Hay*, which simply declared that *imperialist concessions* in China granted to any single nation should be available to all. Such concessions included the regulation of Chinese customs collections, the garrisoning of foreign troops, and territorial “leaseholds,” that established western military and political control over strategic seaports and land bases. Western rights of such “unequal treaties” also included the right of all western personnel to be charged and tried by their own western courts established in China—a right termed “extra-territoriality.”

Chinese opposition was first expressed in the “*Boxer Rebellion*” (1899-1990), which only resulted in its suppression and indemnity obligations to the Western imperialist powers for their combined political-military action in suppressing the Boxer Rebellion. A so-called “*Republican Revolution*” in 1911 in China ousted Manchus rule in favor of the “presidency” of *Yuan Shih-kai* but did little to change the political subjugation of China to imperialist power. Chinese nationalist frustration was acerbated when at the *Versailles Peace Conference* in 1919 she received no consideration against foreign imperialist influence, even though she had acted as a *co-belligerent* in the war against Germany. Chinese nationalist frustration was manifested to the world in the famous political demonstration held at *Tiananmen Square* in 1919.

And, absent any national political leadership, real authority in China in the early 1920s reverted to “*Tuchanate rule*,” as the rule of individual warlords in their personal territorial fiefs of political-military power. The West, in turn, played off the warlord regimes against one another to consolidate their own political influence in China. The largest of the regional warlords controlling various provinces in China was *Chang Tso-lin* in Manchuria with more than 250,000 troops under his personal command. In their ensemble, the regional warlords controlled some 600,000 troops paid by opium trade with foreign powers and onerous taxes levied on the peasantry.

**Sun Yat-sen and the Establishment of the Kuomintang:** A new nationalism in China to free itself from western encroachment found it chief expression in the political-economic thought of *Sun Yat-sen*. Dr. Sun received a Ph.D. degree in political science from Harvard University in the United States, and developed a program for third-world countries to affirm their own national political destiny that was latter to serve as a model for what today we refer to as *third-world development theory*. And Dr. Sun’s political model was founded on the premise that third-countries must begin with the proposition of *phased self-development*. Building on a combination of Aristotelian and Marxist thought, Dr. Sun developed his famous “*Three People’s Principles*” for the transformation of China into a modern nation-state on the same level as other advanced industrial democracies in western Europe. The three people’s principles (Kuomintang) called for the a renewed China based on “*nationalism,*” “*livelihood,*” and “*democracy.*”

Nationalism called for China to assert herself as an *independent sovereign nation-state* in the modern international system rather than a subjugated object of western imperialism. Livelihood called for China to develop the modern *economic industrial power* to militarily assert its sovereign identity to the outside world and provide for the domestic economic wherewithal to support a broad middle-class of a universally educated citizenry capable of *domestic democratic self-rule*. And such national economic development in turn required a lengthy period of *capital accumulation* characterized by low consumption and high industrial capital turnover investment. And given the economic hardship encountered during a lengthy period of capital accumulation, a concomitant period of *single-party, semi-authoritarian rule* must precede the advancement to a final stage of political democracy, which would be a transitional form of political rule similar to the Bolshevik regime in Soviet Russia.
After the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, Dr. Sun organized the establishment of a political party called the Kuomintang to advance his “three people’s principles.” The Kuomintang was organized as a political-military force to consolidate political power in China in the overthrow warlord rule, establish national Chinese sovereignty against foreign imperialist rule, and advance Chinese economic development under single-party Kuomintang rule preparatory to the establishment of a full-fledged Chinese democratic polity. After Dr. Sun’s death in 1925, the leadership of the Kuomintang Party passed to General Chiang Kai-shek and eventually came to more popularly be known as the Chinese Nationalist Party. The headquarters of the Kuomintang movement was established in Canton in the southeastern Kwantung Province. And its initial mission was to recruit a military force under the military leadership of Chiang Kai-shek to advance northward and progressively expel the warlord regimes from power to establish a united government throughout China under the Nationalist Party rule, as the first step in the restoration Chinese national sovereignty. The project for the political-military movement northward to expel the landlord regimes was called “The Northern Expedition.”

**Russian Soviet Policy in China:** Both from an ideological and foreign policy perspective the Kuomintang movement in China offered Soviet Russia an excellent **target of opportunity.** The West and the Japanese had no interest in supporting a nationalist movement that would assert a Chinese national sovereignty that would abrogate their imperialist concessions in China. But Soviet Russia asserted that by its very ideological foundations it stood for the complete national self-determination of Chinese sovereignty. From an ideological standpoint, the Soviet Union as a socialist government had no need for the export of surplus capital accompanied by political colonization to counteract a domestic overaccumulation of capital. Moreover, to support the Chinese resistance to such features of imperialism would be to undercut the very economic basis of forestalling the onset of economic depression and a socialist revolutionary consciousness in Europe. And from a practical foreign policy standpoint, it was as much in the interest of the Soviet Union as it was in the interest of China to remove foreign imperialist influence from China, especially that of Japan, as a threat to the national security interest of the Soviet Union.

As early as 1920, Soviet revolutionary theory regarding the political composition of class-based democracy was modified for third-world colonial countries to include the “national bourgeoisie” in addition to the proletariat and the peasantry. The argument was that the first step of democracy in third-world countries in establishing popular class rule was national self-determination from imperialist political rule; and in third-world colonial countries this included the national bourgeoisie, because their own capitalist class interest at the national level was undercut by the foreign extraction of all capitalist profit. Therefore the capitalist bourgeoisie, like Chiang Kai-shek, were equally committed to national self-determination, as a first-phase national democratic phase of the class-based democracy against imperialist rule, along with the proletariat and the peasantry.

In 1923, the Soviet government dispatched Comintern agent Mikhail Borodin to Canton to instruct the political organization of the Kuomintang along the lines of democratic centralism of single-party rule to promote the success of the Northern Expedition against warlord rule, the expulsion of foreign imperialist rule, and the enforcement of a high state capital turnover to achieve an accelerated industrialization of the Chinese economy. And the next year, the Soviet government sent Mikhail Blukher of the Red Army to begin training of an effective Kuomintang military land force at a newly established Whampoa Military Academy in Canton. Additionally, a newly established Chinese Communist Party under Che Tu-hsiu in 1922 was ordered to give its full support to the Kuomintang political leader under Chiang Kai-shek by establishing dual membership in the Kuomintang while maintaining its separate Communist Party organization under Comintern control.

**The Northern Expedition:** The military campaign of KMT forces to move north to defeat the warlord regimes began on July 6, 1926, and was split into two armies composed of the a KMT-right and KMT-left. The KMT-right was composed of the more conservative capitalist forces headed both politically and militarily by Chiang Kai-shek. The KMT-left was composed of left-leaning but non-Communist members and Communist Party members with dual Communist Party and KMT membership. The KMT-left was headed by the non-Communist political and military leadership of Wang Ching-wei and Chang Fa-kwei respectively. In the first phase of the Northern Expedition, the forces of the KMT-left were to defeat Sun Chuang-fang, the Chinese warlord of Hunan Province, and take strategic city of Wuhan on the Yangtze River which marks the beginning of central China. The KMT-right was to move
northward to the east of the KMT-left to defeat Wu Pei-fu, the Chinese warlord of Kiangsi Province, and take the strategic city of Nanking on the Yangtze River lying 170 miles northeast of Shanghai. Following this, the forces of the KMT-left and the KMT-right were to link up for a combined assault through central and northern China for a showdown against the forces of Chang Tso-lin in Manchuria, who was the most powerful warlord in China.

The first phase of the Northern Expedition was remarkably successful, as both the KMT-left and the KMT-right accomplished their objectives by the spring of 1927, but at this point a political-military rupture between the two KMT forces took place. Chiang Kai-shek had always been suspicious of a Communist take-over once the Northern Expedition had completed the expulsion of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin, as a Leninist version of uninterrupted revolution moving to a new democratic capitalist class-based dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, and then to an ultimate democratic socialist class-based dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry. Even before the political-military campaign of the Northern Expedition began, Chiang Kai-shek demanded on March 20, 1926, that all Communists be removed from positions of political leadership in both factions of the Kuomintang and no separate Communist cells be established in either faction of the Kuomintang. To maintain priority on its immediate geopolitical interest in driving out western influence from East Asia, Moscow had no choice but to comply with Chiang Kai-shek’s ultimatum.

After his occupation of Nanking, Chiang then took further preemptive action in a predictable complete rupture with the Communist membership of the Kuomintang. Instead of linking up with the KMT-left to confront the Manchurian warlord, Chang Tso-lin, Chiang turned his forces to suppress a Communist-led strike in Shanghai aimed against the center of western financial-military influence centered in Shanghai. And in a five-day bloodbath from 12-17 April, 1927, Chiang’s forces brutally massacred tens of thousands of Chinese workers. Under Comintern instructions, the Communist membership of the KMT-left reacted by expelling Chiang Kai-shek from the Kuomintang Party, while ordering the KMT-left at Wuhan to alone continue its campaign against Chang Tso-lin. And, at first, the campaign against Chang Tso-lin by the KMT-left was successful; it inflicted heavy casualties on Chang Tso-lin’s forces and drove his troops back across the Yellow River into north China. But at the same time, large-scale strikes broke out in Wuhan along with mass peasant uprisings in Hunan Province to the south.

Although largely spontaneous, the KMT-left leadership under Wang Ching-wei saw the two events as Comintern ordered uprisings for a nationwide Communist revolution in China to stop Chiang Kai-shek from seizing total power. Chiang Kai-shek operating from Shanghai had already made peace with the West and was seeking a modus vivendi with Chang Tso-lin. As such, Wang Ching-wei stopped his own campaign against Chang Tso-lin and turned his KMT-left leadership against his former Communist allies, unleashing his own brutal suppression of the Chinese Communist Party in Hunan Province. The Comintern had no choice but to declare on July 14, 1927, that the KMT-left under Wang Ching-wei had become just as counterrevolutionary as Chiang Kai-shek, and finally did call for a nationwide Communist revolution as the only course of Communist Party survival. Throughout the rest of the summer and fall of 1927, the forces of both Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Ching-wei pursued the Communists back through the Hunan and Kiangsi Provinces to a last Communist stronghold at Canton in Kwantung Province.

The Canton Commune: In a desperate attempt to politically salvage Communist influence in China, the Comintern set two of its agents, Besso Lominadze and Heinz Neumann, to establish a “Canton Commune” as a Communist stronghold from which to launch a nationwide Communist revolution. In an attempt to seize Communist power in Canton, some 2,000 Red Guard cadets from the Whampoa Military Academy engaged the regular Kuomintang forces from 11-13 December, 1927. Some 6,000 people were killed in a brutal anti-Communist bloodbath by the regular Kuomintang forces of Wang Ching-wei and Chiang Kai-shek, annihilating what was left of Comintern organization of the Communist Party in China.

The failure of the Canton Commune ended all formal Soviet government relations with the newly established official government Nationalist (Kuomintang) government in China in 1928 under Chiang Kai-shek until a Japanese offensive to gain military control of the Chinese mainland in 1937. Like the failure of the Brandler uprising in Germany, the Soviet-led Comintern blamed the Communist failure in China on Chinese Community Party leader Chen Tu-hsiu, for failing to properly carry out Comintern instructions, which instructions he actually carried out in scrupulous detail as ordered by Stalin. This time the charge was “opportunism,” that is, failure to act boldly in a timely fashion to carry out a nationwide Communist revolution in the wake of reaction by both Chang Kai-shek and
Wang Ching-wei (again though such timing was ordered by the Soviet-led Comintern). And as political scapegoats, the Comintern ordered the expulsion of Chen Tu-hsiu and his leading associates from the Chinese Communist Party.

The Impact of 1920s Foreign Policy on Soviet Domestic Politics

The Domestic Opposition of the “Trotskyist Left”: The “Trotskyist Left” had already been expelled from positions of domestic political power by the end of 1926. But it continued to voice its disapproval of Stalinist policy of failing to know when to break with counterrevolutionary bourgeois capitalist allies on the domestic front in his continued support of NEP on the domestic front, but now, especially, on the foreign policy front of failing to denounce the bourgeois capitalist allies of Chiang Kai-shek of the KMT-right and Wang Ching-wei of the KMT-left in China. Following the defection of Chiang Kai-shek in April 1927, and suspecting the subsequent defection of Wang Ching-wei, the “Trotskyist Left,” led by Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Radek in addition to Trotsky himself, already on 25 May, 1927, presented a public “Declaration to the Politburo.” The Declaration called on the Russian Soviet leadership headed by Stalin to instruct the Comintern to call for the Chinese Communist Party to immediately end all its political collaboration with the KMT, including the KMT-left of Wang Ching-wei to continue the Northern Expedition against Chang Tso-lin, and call for Communist uprisings in key cities looking to immediate Communist political rule throughout the whole of China.

The Declaration went on to add that Chiang Kai-shek’s April massacre could have been avoided if the Soviet Politburo had listened to the voices of the “Left-Opposition” and ordered the preparation for a direct Communist takeover from the start. This constituted a public critique of the Stalinist composition of the Politburo and threatened their personal power. The blood purges of the Chinese Communist Party by both Wang Ching-wei and Chiang Kai-shek in the summer and fall of 1927 were then cited as confirmation of their critique of Stalinist revolutionary strategy – a revolutionary strategy which was seen to put the quest of the national security of the Soviet state above the commitment to world revolution. On 25 October, 1927, the Left-Opposition went so far as organize an open street demonstration in Leningrad to protest what it considered to be revolutionary cowardice on the party of the Stalinist Politburo.

The Liquidation of the Left Opposition: The open criticism and organized political protest of the Left-Opposition was an easy target of the Stalinist Politburo to respond to the challenge of the Trotskyist-left as constituting a breach of the Leninist ban against “party factionalism.” Trotsky and Zinoviev were expelled from the Soviet Communist Party on 14 November, 1927, and seventy-five other members, including Kamenev, were likewise expelled at the Fifteenth Party Congress (2-19, December 1927).

On 19 January, 1928, the “departure” from Moscow of some thirty members of the Left-Opposition was announced. Zinoviev and Kamenev soon recanted and confessed to having been factionalists in their opposition to Stalinist Politburo policy. After public humiliation, Zinoviev and Kamenev were for a time readmitted to party membership, but never again to hold any real political power, and finally to be the principle figures of on the great public show trial of 1936, in which they were branded as left-wing adventurers who objectively acted as saboteurs of the Soviet state, and condemned to execution. Trotsky remained defiant. At first, he was first exiled to Alma Ata in Kazakhstan, and then in 1929 exiled from the Soviet Union. After spending some time in France where he had supporters of his ideology legacy led especially the French Communist Boris Souvarine, Trotsky finally ended up in Mexico where he organized his own Trotskyist International based on his theory of permanent revolution.

Because of Trotsky’s international renown, Stalin could not overlook the worldwide criticism of Trotsky to Stalin’s personal rule, especially in Trotsky’s critique of sacrificing world revolution to Soviet foreign policy interests. In 1940, almost certainly under Stalin’s instructions, Trotsky was assassinated in Mexico City by a Comintern agent, Ramon Mercader.

The Arcos Raid: Great Britain had established political recognition and diplomatic and trade relations with the Soviet Union in December 1923 under the Labour Party government of Ramsay MacDonald. The Conservative Party government of Stanley Baldwin, which followed the short-lived tenure of the Labour Party government of Ramsay MacDonald in 1924, was much less inclined toward normal diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia. The reserve of
the British Conservative Party toward Soviet Russia moved towards outright hostility in the wake of Soviet support for the Kuomintang nationalist movement in China, which stood for the liquidation of British foreign concessions in China.

The acronym Arcos stood for the All-Russian Cooperative Society as an organization established by the Soviet government to promote Soviet trade with Great Britain, with its headquarters in London. On 12 May, 1927, the British police raided the headquarters of Arcos, claiming that they were looking for a stolen British government document. After three days of search, including the dynamiting of safes and the use of pneumatic air hammers on the floor, the British police found nothing. Nevertheless, the Baldwin government used the news coverage of suspicion to gain public acceptance of his government’s announced termination of British diplomatic and trade relations with the Soviet Union.

The aftermath of Arcos, occurring at the same time as the KMT repression of the Chinese Communist Party, led Stalin to believe that support for bourgeois political parties and bourgeois governments to gain greater national Soviet security for socialism in one country was fraught with political drawbacks. This led Stalin, beginning in 1928, to take a radical reversal of emphasis of both Soviet domestic and foreign policy. On the domestic front, it led Stalin to denounce NEP and set about the collectivization of Soviet agriculture to support an exponential growth of Soviet heavy industry; and on the foreign policy front it led Stalin to order a dramatic shift in Comintern policy to a denunciation of all political alliances with non-Communist parties – including non-Communist Marxist parties – in favor of a call for immediate overthrow of capitalist governments by sectarian Communist Parties. Such were, ironically, the advocacy of the very policies for which the Trotskyist-left had just been condemned.
Questions for Reflection

(1) How can it be said that the in the constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of 31, January 1924 the national government formally held only a contingent sovereignty? As such, what centralized political organ assured the predominant authority of the national government? What did Lenin say about Stalin in Lenin’s *Final Testament* about the suitability of Stalin’s character to exercise supreme power on the Politburo? Why did Grigorii Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev at first fear Trotsky more than Stalin as one who might try to assume the political role of a “Soviet Napoleon”?

(2) How did the “equilibrium theory” of Nikolai Bukharin argue that the poor peasantry would naturally be inclined to turn to collectivized agriculture under NEP? In opposition to Bukharin what did Leon Trotsky argue would be the role of the rich peasantry under NEP in a “scissors crisis” to undermine the necessary state turnover capital for industrialization and hold the cities in a food crisis similar to war communism? What, then, did Trotsky call for in conjunction with Evgenii Preobrazhenskii and Gosplan regarding an immediate government policy regarding Soviet agriculture?

(3) On what basis for a “lack of revolutionary boldness” did Trotsky at first attack Zinoviev and Kamenev in his *Lessons of October* published in *Pravda* October 1924 to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution? What position of power was Trotsky forced to give up for being accused of promoting “factionalism” in the Communist Party in publishing his *Lessons of October*? Stalin began his political campaign against Zinoviev and Kamenev by undermining their basis of power in the Communist Party organizations of what two cities? Stalin was then joined by what other three members of the Soviet Politburo as a “political-right” against a “political-left” of Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev?

(4) What did the new Soviet Communist International (Comintern), led by Grigorii Zinoviev, demand for membership in the Comintern based on Soviet Russian ideological orthodoxy and Soviet Russian foreign policy interests, as opposed to the western-style parliamentary democracy and national domestic foreign policy interests? What diplomatic success did the Rapallo Pact of 1922 signed between Soviet Russia and Weimar Germany achieve for Soviet foreign policy? How, in turn, was the diplomatic rapprochement of the Soviet government with Germany under Rapallo undermined by Comintern instructions to German Communist party leader, Heinrich Brandler, the very next year in 1923?

(5) Why did the Soviet government find it both in its ideological revolutionary interest and its geopolitical foreign policy interest to support Kuomintang political objectives in China? What was to be the quest of the combined KMT-left and KMT-right in the “Northern Expedition”? What happened when the KMT-left under Wang Ching-wei reached Wuhan and the KMT-right under Chiang Kai-shek reached Nanking? What finally visited the entire Communist movement in Hunan and Kiangsi provinces in the summer and fall of 1927? What happened in the story of the “Canton Commune” (11-13 December, 1927)? How did the Trotskyist-left react to Stalin’s 1927 policy in China?

(6) What happened in the Arcos Raid of the British government against the Soviet trade headquarters in London (27 May, 1927)? What effect did the combination of the events in China and Great Britain have on thinking of Stalin as the supreme head of the Politburo about a reversal of Soviet policy toward both NEP and the Comintern revolutionary policy?