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Leon Trotsky and Mikhail Khodorkovskii: Adaptive Ideology and the Struggle for Power

1. Introduction

During the twentieth century, Russia underwent two events that shaped its course in history through the modern day: the Bolshevik Revolution and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the wake of these developments, there arose two new political orders: the first self-proclaimed Marxist-communist state and Russia’s first democracy.1 Two figures in particular would shape the opposition in the years following these events: Leon Trotsky and Mikhail Khodorkovskii. Their rise to and fall from power in these new systems, the reversal of their previously held beliefs, and their resistance against Joseph Stalin and Vladimir Putin, respectively, by opposing the very establishments they helped create are themes that run throughout both figures’ narratives.

Because he is a key historical figure, much has been written about Trotsky. One of the most important sources is Isaac Deutscher’s extensive, three-volume biography. The second volume is especially useful for understanding his role as the main opposition to Stalin.2 Moreover, Trotsky himself was a prolific writer on politics, economics, culture and society. Parts of his work, *The Lessons of October* [Уроки октября], written during his struggle for power, are particularly revealing with regard to his political tactics. The first volume of Stephen Kotkin’s *Stalin* is another source that depicts Stalin’s struggle with Trotsky in detail. In contrast, there are only a few books written on Khodorkovskii, mainly because he is a contemporary figure. Martin Sixsmith’s book, *Putin’s Oil*, is extremely helpful because it describes the context of Khodorkovskii’s struggle with Putin and how encounters between the two shaped the eventual

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1 Considered a *de jure* democracy, with present authoritarian elements, such as the suppression of independent media companies, a limited (and suppressed) opposition, and systematic corruption.
2 It should be noted that Deutscher was highly sympathetic to Trotsky’s plight and highly critical of Stalin’s regime.
outcome of the conflict. Khodorkovskii’s rise and struggle for power were also covered by a variety of Western and Russian media and academic sources. Although Khodorkovskii is more of a businessman than an intellectual, he has also written and spoken extensively about his political and economic views.

Despite the wealth of materials available on them individually, up to this point little academic work has been done comparing Trotsky and Khodorkovskii. In the epilogue of his recent book, *Practicing Stalinism*, Arch Getty is the only scholar to acknowledge a connection between the two. Against the backdrop of Putin and Khodorkovskii’s struggle for power, Getty makes the comparison to Stalin and Trotsky’s own struggle: “[i]n both modern cases, there was a new leader who was not yet a dictator, a powerful challenger, and a particular understanding of the rules of oligarchy.”³ To battle these consolidating dictatorships, Trotsky and Khodorkovskii created public images of themselves as figures who had always struggled against the status quo. These reinventions, Getty concludes, “involved radical shifts in their previously professed beliefs [and] serve to highlight the personal nature of Russian politics.”⁴ Getty argues that it was a desire for personal, rather than ideological, power that characterized the conflicts. While Getty makes some insightful points, his analysis continues for no more than five pages. Thus, this paper will elaborate on the comparison between the two figures, examining reasoning behind Trotsky and Khodorkovskii’s ideological shifts—since both publicly changed their beliefs against the background of their struggles for power—as well as the reasons why these struggles for power ended in failure. By presenting the two side by side, it becomes possible to understand the extent to which personal politics and ideology have shaped the major struggles for power in modern

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³ Getty, 285.
⁴ Ibid., 288.
Russian history in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods and comprehend the impossibility of forming a sustained and influential opposition in Russian politics.

2. Trotsky: The Party’s Disciplinarian

Born in Central Ukraine in 1879, Lev Bronstein was a lifelong revolutionary. After joining the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party [RSDLP] upon its founding in 1898, he soon exchanged his surname for the name Trotsky.\(^5\) Due to his underground revolutionary activities he would spend much of the years leading up to 1917 either in prison, in exile in Siberia, or abroad. During this time, he became acquainted with the diaspora of socialists and communists from the Russian Empire scattered across Europe, one of whom, Vladimir Lenin, would become a major influence for the young Trotsky. However, the split in the RSDLP in 1903 between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks created an ideological gap between the two men; Lenin became the leader of the radical Bolshevik minority, and Trotsky a self-proclaimed non-aligned socialist.

After the February Revolution,\(^6\) Trotsky returned to Russia from abroad and joined a small, centrist socialist party. However, he did sympathize with the Bolshevik cause.\(^7\) By August, Trotsky was a full-fledged member of the Bolsheviks and became a key player as the President of the Petrograd Soviet. His support for Lenin in planning the impending insurrection was crucial in convincing other Bolsheviks in the Central Committee to seize power. He was also responsible for organizing the Red Guard units who ultimately brought the Bolsheviks victory in Petrograd in October.

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\(^5\) He changed his name for the dual purpose of hiding his Jewish origins in the anti-Semitic Russian society and masking his true identity from Tsarist police and anti-revolutionary forces.

\(^6\) The February Revolution was caused by massive civil unrest in Petrograd due to the continuation of World War I and the economic hardships that followed. The revolution ultimately resulted in Nicholas II’s abdication and the formation of a dual government made up of the liberal-leaning Provisional Government and the socialist-filled Petrograd Soviet.

\(^7\) Trotsky, *The Lessons of October*, 27.
Following the revolution, Trotsky held some of the highest offices in the fledgling state. As Commissar for Foreign Affairs, he helped negotiate the unsavory, yet necessary, peace treaty with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk. Soon afterwards, he turned his attention to the growing Russian Civil War and, as Commissar of War, set out to create a cohesive standing army out of the uncoordinated and undisciplined bands, effectively founding the Red Army. As head of the Red Army and a Bolshevik, he was a swift disciplinarian who sought to form a professional fighting force to combat the White rebels.

In 1921, with the Civil War recently ended, Trotsky displayed his aptitude for discipline during the Kronstadt Rebellion. The Kronstadt sailors were mostly communists and anarchists who had been staunch Bolshevik supporters even before the October Revolution and had fought directly under Trotsky’s command during the Civil War.\(^8\) When the sailors voiced their complaints about the lack of democracy in the new Bolshevik government, the Bolsheviks “denounced the men of Kronstadt as counter-revolutionary mutineers led by a White general.”\(^9\) Soon afterwards, due to a fear that the ice surrounding the island fortress would soon melt—making the prospects of any assault on the island even more dismal—the rebellion was quashed at great cost by troops on Trotsky’s orders. His explanation for why the sailors were dealt with so swiftly and harshly were purely logistical: “we were confronted by the danger that the ice would melt away and were compelled to carry out…the attack.”\(^10\) However easy it might be to simplify the rebellion’s elimination as a militarily logistical matter, the fact remains that the sailors were merely voicing their opposition. Instead of trying to negotiate with their erstwhile allies, Trotsky and the Bolshevik government first denounced them and then swiftly put down the rebellion.

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\(^8\) Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 512.
\(^9\) Ibid., 511.
\(^10\) Ibid., 514.
Trotskii’s fervor for party discipline also came through in his dealing with the Workers’ Opposition. The group was composed of party members who were critical of policies pursued under the New Economic Policy [NEP],11 which they argued had led to greater bureaucratization and inequity. They were seen as a dangerous faction by Trotsky, who “indicted the Workers’ Opposition before the party and Communist International” and would later claim that their leadership “had introduced an intolerably violent tone into the dispute…. Such an attitude, he said, led to schism and provided grist to the mills of the enemies of the revolution.”12

Having come to power as one of the leading figures of the fledgling socialist state, Trotsky proved to be one of the party’s harshest leaders in upholding party discipline. This makes sense, since his position as Commissar of War called for him to be strict in order to hold together the ragtag Red Army. However, his fondness for discipline was not just a product of the responsibilities of his position. Much of his ideology was undemocratic by nature and called for strictness within the party to ensure the success of socialism in Russia.

3. Khodorkovskii: From the Komsomol to Capitalism

Almost half a century later, Mikhail Khodorkovskii was born in 1963 near Moscow to a family of chemical engineers.13 Following in his parents’ footsteps, Khodorkovskii entered the Mendeleev Institute of Chemical Technology and began studying chemical engineering himself. During this period, he joined the Komsomol, a communist youth organization known for being made up of “conformists and social climbers.”14 Against the background of Gorbachev’s perestroika, in which the State’s economic monopoly was loosened and private enterprise grew,

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11 A slight liberalization of the economy pushed by Lenin in 1921 after the near-catastrophic experiment of War Communism. The reforms allowed for private industry on a small level and privatization of some farming lands while national industries and a few collective farms were still run by the state.
13 Sixsmith, 17.
14 Ibid., 17.
and with connections he made in the Komsomol, the young Khodorkovskii proved himself to be an adaptive businessman.

Starting by cofounding a café in 1986, Khodorkovskii soon moved on to bigger projects, founding Menatep, which “provided computer programmers to service the burgeoning IT networks of state enterprises and government ministries.”15 Once Khodorkovskii had built up enough cash reserves and Soviet laws on private banking were loosened, Menatep was transformed into one of the Soviet Union’s first private financial institutions: Menatep Bank. Never one to fully comply with the rules, “Khodorkovskii and his inventive partners found a way round the [Soviet currency exchange] system that allowed them to change soft money into hard money, and they charged healthy margins for doing so.”16

In the midst of the political and economic chaos of the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Khodorkovskii and his band of capitalists set out on a precarious campaign of private accumulation. To facilitate the privatization of the economy, the Eltsin administration gave every Russian citizen a voucher “representing a very small stake in the country’s economy.”17 The majority of the Russian economy, which was valued at only $9 billion—a fraction of its actual value—in the voucher system, was sold practically overnight. In the onslaught of acquisition “Menatep bought up masses of vouchers, which gave them shareholdings in dozens of different industries.”18 A new elite had been born, and Khodorkovskii and his partners stood at the top of the new economic order.

However, the new oligarchy did not restrict itself solely to the sphere of profiteering. By the mid-1990s, it had become increasingly clear that business and politics in Russia were deeply

15 Sixsmith, 19.
16 Ibid., 27.
17 Ibid., 30.
18 Ibid., 31.
intertwined, effectively forming a plutocracy where the oligarchy strongly influenced every level of government. Khodorkovskii was no different. Having begun his fortunes in Menatep, he now looked towards other industries, namely oil. At the time, Russia’s oil industry was one of the few major industries that had been left in the state’s hands. To gain access to the industry, Khodorkovskii’s “relations with the Yeltsin administration [were strengthened] . . . and in 1993 he had taken the precaution of asking the President to give him a government post.”\textsuperscript{19} As expected, he was assigned to the post of Deputy Oil Minister in the Department of Energy. While serving in this position, he gained several business connections that would benefit him only a few years later, “when the state began to privatize its oil and gas resources.”\textsuperscript{20}

In 1995, with the threat of the communists winning the 1996 presidential election, Eltsin’s administration became desperate to sell off the last of Russia’s state enterprises to make it more difficult for the communists to reverse Eltsin’s reforms. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Khodorkovskii and another oligarch, Vladimir Potanin, approached Eltsin with a deal to loan the Russian government $1.8 billion if the government “put up the deeds to some of Russia’s strategic state enterprises,” though it was well known that the government would not be able to pay back the loans.\textsuperscript{21} When the government did inevitably default on its loans, shares in the nationalized industry were sold off to the oligarchy in 1996. For a paltry sum of $309 million, “Khodorkovskii got a majority stake in the massive Yukos oil conglomerate, then Russia’s second largest producer.”\textsuperscript{22}

Thus, in 1996, the plutocracy, and Khodorkovskii’s place within it, was fully realized. The Russian plutocracy was accused of having “largely co-opted Eltsin’s government, silencing

\textsuperscript{19} Sixsmith, 33.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 35.
most opposition to their conduct…. Rather than investing and restructuring these [oil] production companies, the oligarchs looted them—thereby defrauding a wide range of stakeholders.” In short, Russia’s plutocracy played a large role in preventing Russia from fully transitioning to a market economy by manipulating the Russian government and federal laws. Doing so bolstered the oligarchs’ personal wealth while scaring off international investors and business rivals.

Additionally, Khodorkovskii and the rest of the oligarchy, like Trotsky and the Bolsheviks once they took power, often used intimidation and bloodshed to maintain their control. In response to a question about the role of violence in business practices during the time, a major Western oil industry analyst claims that “there is no doubt that large amounts of blood were spilt…most people would accept that this went on, sometimes at quite a local level.” However, while he does not go as far to say that Khodorkovskii himself was personally responsible for any of the bloodshed. Former heads of his security apparatus at Yukos, Leonid Nevzlin and Alexei Pichugin, were both charged by the Russian government for either murder or accessory to murder. On the one hand, these accusations were made in 2003, right as Putin’s government tried to build up a case against Khodorkovskii, so they should not all be taken at face-value; indeed, some of the more well-known cases brought up by Russian prosecutors have been largely disproven. On the other hand, “further murder allegations against the then owners of Yukos and reports of vicious unexplained physical attacks on the company’s business rivals” have also been uncovered.

23 Wolosky.
24 Ibid.
26 Sixsmith, 204.
Khodorkovskii’s rise to wealth was characterized by political manipulation and bloodshed. His actions to attain and hold on to vast swaths of wealth and power were not extraordinary compared to other oligarchs in the 1990s. However, Khodorkovskii, like Trotsky, who changed his ideological position, would attempt to atone for his actions in order to continue his struggle for power in the new millennium.

4. The New Challengers

In both 1922 and 1999, it seemed that Trotsky and Khodorkovskii’s power bases were firmly secured. However, in less than five years, both figures would lose their bases of power and become disenfranchised from the power structures. This turn of events can be explained by the introduction of underestimated challengers. For Trotsky, the challenger was the then little-known general secretary, Joseph Stalin, who rose to power as Lenin’s health began to decline. In 1999, the politically retreating Yeltsin appointed the ex-KGB agent-turned-politician, Vladimir Putin, to the office of president of Russia. In both cases, the challengers consolidated power with surprising swiftness, leaving Trotsky and Khodorkovskii struggling for survival.

Like Trotsky, Stalin had been a revolutionary for much of his life. After being expelled from seminary school, he escalated his revolutionary activities as a member of the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party.27 However, unlike Trotsky, Stalin had been a Bolshevik from the point of Lenin’s split from the Mensheviks in 1903. In the party, he was known as a prolific propagandist and organizer. This caught the attention of Lenin, who was impressed with the young revolutionary’s effectiveness and promoted him to a position on the Central Committee in 1912. This promotion marked his ascent to the highest echelons of the Party. During the course of 1917, “Stalin was deeply engaged in all deliberations and actions in the innermost circle of the Bolshevik leadership and, as the coup neared and then took place, he was observed in the thick

27 The major Russian Marxist socialist party in pre-revolutionary Russia.
of events.” Stal
in was also one of the Party’s chief propagandists at the time, authoring “some forty lead articles” and delivering “speech upon speech, many of which were published in the press.” Like Trotskii, he supported Lenin and was one of the strongest agitators for revolutionary action.

After the Civil War, “Lenin created a new post, ‘general secretary’ of the party, expressly for Stalin.” Only seven weeks later, Lenin would suffer his first stroke, leaving him incapable of effectively running the country. As general secretary, Stalin was charged with running the daily operations of the party and appointing members to various posts in the growing party apparatus. This new bureaucratic position became increasingly powerful in Stalin’s politically-adept hands. He placed people he knew would be loyal to only him in key seats of power in local party apparatuses and throughout the rest of the bureaucracy, effectively creating a clientele system within the party. It was in this new and underestimated position that Stalin’s power began to grow, right as Lenin’s absence as the head of the new country created a power vacuum, instigating a struggle for power.

In 1952, thirty years later and just five months before Stalin’s own death, another challenger, Vladimir Putin, was born in Leningrad. After he graduated from law school at Leningrad State University [LGU] in 1975, he joined the KGB. Little is known about his first ten years in the service. However, in 1985, he was placed on his “first and only foreign assignment” in Dresden, East Germany. The details of Putin’s service in Saxony are difficult to corroborate,

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28 Sixsmith, 176–177.
29 Ibid., 177.
30 Ibid., 411.
31 Ibid., 412.
32 Treisman, 83.
but he claimed his main assignment during the period “was to recruit East Germans who had some cover story for traveling to the West.”

After Moscow decided to pull out of East Germany, as the communist states in Central and Eastern Europe began to collapse, Putin was reassigned as “assistant rector at LGU, spying on foreign students.” At the same time, the Soviet political system was quickly unraveling. In Leningrad a former LGU law professor, Anatoly Sobchak, became mayor. While searching for staff members, Sobchak looked to his former university and was put in contact with Putin, who was immediately hired as his assistant.

Under Sobchak’s tutelage, Putin’s main task was “to attract business to the city and revive its depressed economy.” Putin used his ex-KGB contacts—a practice that he would continue as president—to create his own network. However, in 1996, Sobchak lost favor with the Yeltsin administration and was forced to flee Russia with Putin’s help. Undeterred, Putin moved to Moscow, where he rose quickly through the bureaucratic ranks, becoming head of the FSB by 1998.

President Eltsin, whose administration was at the time floundering under allegations of corruption and a long line of other embarrassments, was searching for a safe exit from power. He found this opportunity in Putin, who had by this point proved his loyalty to his superiors. On August 9, 1999, Eltsin appointed the then mostly unknown Putin as the Prime Minister. Soon, Putin’s popularity surged as he took a hard stance on the Second Chechen War. At this point, Eltsin and his close network of oligarchs decided to put their full trust in Putin’s loyalty when

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33 Ibid., 83.
34 Ibid., 84.
35 Ibid., 85.
36 Ibid., 87.
37 Ibid., 89.
38 Seen as a continuation of the First Chechen War (1994–1996), the war was again fought over Chechnia’s sovereignty. The conflict resulted in Russia’s absorption of Chechnia within the Federation, yet gave the local government within Chechnia the autonomy to decide its own affairs.
Eltsin unexpectedly resigned only months short of the end of his term. Putin succeeded him and three months later won the presidential election with 53 percent of the vote. 39

Thus, in both 1922 and 2000, Stalin and Putin began to consolidate their respective new positions as the old leaders, Lenin and Eltsin, left the political scene. Up to this point, they were merely known as people who could be trusted to get things done. Now, they started to cultivate their public images as pragmatists who would achieve popular goals. It was then that the power struggle began in earnest, as Stalin and Putin cemented their power and disenfranchised their opposition, particularly their most threatening potential challengers: Trotsky and Khodorkovskii, respectively. Stalin and his allies soon began a campaign against Trotsky, portraying him as an oppositionist willing to sacrifice party unity, and by extension weaken the country, for his own personal goals. Putin’s camp started to depict Khodorkovskii similarly—as an opportunist, but also as a corrupt businessman, delegitimizing any of his ambitions for power.

5. The Battle for the Politburo

While Lenin was still an active member of the Party with his position in power cemented in the Politburo and the military, Trotsky remained highly critical of any voiced opposition to the Party. Robert Daniels makes the argument that “[Trotsky] boldly set himself up as a target for the fire of the anti-bureaucratic forces” simply to protect Lenin’s prestige. 40 Furthermore, Daniels maintains that Trotsky was in reality always sympathetic with the pro-democracy opposition. However, much of Trotsky’s own ideology placed him clearly in favor of greater bureaucracy and control over the masses. For example, his “militarization of labor” theory required “the conscription and direction of civilian labor” within military units, combining the discipline of military service with the productivity of labor to replace the idleness of a military

39 Treisman, 92.
40 Daniels, 129.
during peacetime.\textsuperscript{41} In other words, before his struggle for power with Stalin began, Trotsky was one of the Party’s principal defenders and advocates for discipline. He opted for bureaucracy instead of democracy to fulfill his ideological objectives.

Trotsky’s change of heart began in 1922. In the first half of the year, “Trotsky still spoke primarily as the Bolshevik disciplinarian; in the second he was already in conflict with the disciplinarians.”\textsuperscript{42} By the middle of 1922, he began to argue against bureaucracy and the NEP. The bureaucracy, which he had helped to build, was now in Trotsky’s eyes the greatest internal enemy to the Soviet Union. He could combat it only by breaking party discipline. In his biography on Trotsky, Deutscher argues that Trotsky “did not simply ‘reject’ bureaucracy” and that “it is impossible to pinpoint the change in Trotsky’s attitude.”\textsuperscript{43}

On the contrary, the timing of Lenin’s incapacitating first stroke in May 1922, which caused him to effectively exit politics starting in December later that year, is telling. Just two months earlier in March, Trotsky (along with Zinoviev) had condemned the Workers’ Opposition in front of both the Party and Comintern.\textsuperscript{44} Yet, only a few months later, Trotsky started a massive shake-up of the “political branch of the army,” including the removal of a political antagonist who was “head of the Political Administration of the Revolutionary Military Council.”\textsuperscript{45} Later, in early 1923, “Trotsky submitted a scheme for a radical reorganization of the Central Committee and its various agencies,” stating that it “had lost touch with the lower ranks and had become transformed into a self-sufficient bureaucratic machine.”\textsuperscript{46} Trotsky understood

\textsuperscript{41} Deutscher, \textit{The Prophet Armed}, 494.
\textsuperscript{42} Deutscher, \textit{The Prophet Unarmed}, 51.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{44} Daniels, 163.
\textsuperscript{45} Daniels, 175.
\textsuperscript{46} Deutscher, \textit{The Prophet Unarmed}, 88.
that his position was under threat and that he needed to consolidate his power and act against a bureaucracy that he perceived was turning against him.

In Lenin’s absence, Joseph Stalin, Grigori Zinov’yev, and Lev Kamenev created what would later become known as the triumvirate. The entire purpose of this alliance “was to prevent Trotsky from having a majority which would enable him to take Lenin’s place.”\(^47\) Trotsky “had the first inkling of a concerted action against him in the early weeks of 1923…when at sessions of the Politburo he found himself attacked by Stalin with quite unwonted ferocity and venom.”\(^48\)

In response to the triumvirate’s concerted actions, Trotsky began to adjust his ideology to oppose their position. For example, later in 1923, when two workers’ opposition groups, the Workers’ Group and the Workers’ Truth, gained popularity for their anti-NEP stances, Trotsky was initially “not at all eager to defend the Workers’ Group and kindred sets of dissenters,” but, upon learning that the triumvirs would start spying on them, “was seized with disgust.”\(^49\) By this point, Trotsky, who had for so long stood for rigid party discipline, began to oppose what the triumvirate attempted because he now saw them as his political enemies.

Furthermore, it was only after Lenin became absent from the political sphere that Trotsky began to argue against NEP. He perceived it as coming under Stalin’s control, but still out of his own sphere of influence. In the critique that he presented at the twelfth congress of the Communist Party, Trotsky called for a greater planned economy, in which “[i]t was necessary to rationalize, modernize, and concentrate industry” (a plan that greatly resembled Stalin’s Five-Year Plan program years later).\(^50\) In fact, no one else in the Politburo agreed with Trotsky’s economic views. By calling for a departure from NEP, Trotsky undoubtedly hoped to attract

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 76.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., 86.
\(^{49}\) Ibid., 108–109.
\(^{50}\) Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, 99.
political allies against the triumvirate. However, Trotsky failed in this respect. His ideology alienated him from the peasants, who would be squeezed by his plans, and from the workers, who Trotsky argued, “would have to shoulder the main burden of industrial reconstruction.”

Throughout 1923 and until he was ousted, Trotsky would advocate for a shift from NEP towards a dictatorship of industry. This change can be explained by the fact that “Trotsky’s desire for a dictatorship of industry and an end to the party’s oversight of the economy had both a policy aspect…and a political aspect:” it was his answer to Stalin’s dictatorship of the party apparatus; while “Stalin could have his party dictatorship and Lenin’s NEP…Trotsky could not have his economic dictatorship and the NEP.” In reality, Trotsky did not want less party bureaucracy. He merely wanted all the organs of the party machine to be placed at his feet to strengthen his position in power. The contradictions in Trotsky’s rhetoric became increasingly plain: “[e]ven as he was railing against bureaucratic ‘degeneration,’ he was proposing a super bureaucracy of specialists (preferably led by him) to ‘plan’ the economy.” Overall, because Trotsky’s own dictatorial vision was incompatible with both Stalin’s bureaucratic patronage and Lenin’s NEP, he was forced to revolt against the political and economic system.

The intensity of the struggle within the Politburo only continued to rise during the course of 1923 in a battle with the triumvirate and what would later be termed the 1923 Opposition. On October 8, Trotsky laid out his new ideas in a letter addressed to the Central Committee. In it, he pointed out the “gulf that now separated the leaders from the rank and file” and pressed that “the party ought not to go on living under the high pressure of civil war discipline.” Furthermore, Trotsky argued that “[t]he hierarchy of secretaries ‘created party opinion,’ discouraged members

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51 Ibid., 101–102.
52 Kotkin, 487.
53 Ibid., 518.
54 Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed., 110.
from expressing or even possessing views of their own, and addressed the rank and file only in words of command and summons.”

Trotskii’s analysis of the Party’s state of affairs at the time was grounded in reality. Throughout the 20s, the Party apparatus would continue to grow, coinciding with declining freedom of expression and dissension. However, Trotsky likely would have been less eager to condemn the system if he were still in power.

Matters escalated further when “on 15 October, forty-six prominent party members issued a solemn statement directed against the official leadership and criticizing its policy in terms almost identical with those Trotsky had employed.” In what would later be called the Declaration of the Forty-Six, Trotsky’s complaints were echoed as the dissenters criticized the “majority of the Politburo” for the dismal economic situation and the “rule of the hierarchy of secretaries and… the stifling of discussion.” However, “going farther than Trotsky, the Forty Six demanded that the ban on inner party groupings should be abolished or relaxed because it served one faction as a screen for its dictatorship over the party, drove disgruntled members to form clandestine groups, and strained their loyalty towards the party.”

Trotsky claimed that he had no part in organizing the Forty-Six, though he had both political and personal relationships with many of the main signatories, including Evgeni Preobrazhenskii and Georgii Piatakov. While there remains no tangible evidence that Trotsky organized the Forty-Six, “it is doubtful that he had… no foreknowledge of the action of the Forty Six or that he was surprised by it,” leading to the conclusion that “even if Trotsky was not formally responsible for their action, he

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55 Ibid., 110.
56 Ibid., 113.
57 Ibid., 113.
58 Ibid., 113.
must be regarded as its actual prompter.” \(^{59}\) This goes to show that Trotsky at least tacitly allowed the formation of a new oppositional faction to face Stalin.

The triumvirate responded by co-opting ideas expounded upon by Trotsky and the 46, and then creating what they termed as the New Course, which would “guarantee full freedom of expression and criticism for party members.” \(^{60}\) Trotsky was forced to sign onto it; doing otherwise would make him appear hypocritical. Taking advantage of the illusion of greater freedom of dissention, Trotsky wrote a few short articles in \textit{Pravda}, unleashing an “attack on ‘officialdom’ in his own department, the army, ‘and—elsewhere’.” \(^{61}\) He also criticized the idolization of both the army and the Old Guard. A few days later, he wrote an open letter “to party meetings” in which he called upon individual party members to fight the party’s machine and to question and confront the Old Guard’s authority. \(^{62}\)

The response to Trotsky’s letter at party meetings was explosive and it evoked massive popular support. At this point, however, Stalin’s grip on the party apparatus was powerful enough to weather the storm. Through his network’s manipulation of the local party system, he was able to silence the opposition. Indeed, by this point “Stalin had already carried out the overhaul of the party machine and had placed his . . . subordinates at every sensitive spot, in every branch of the organization.” \(^{63}\) Since the party secretaries controlled which representatives would be sent to Party Congresses, the opposition, though vocal in meetings, had no way of converting their political energy into substantial gains. In this way, Stalin’s party apparatus kept Trotsky and the Forty-Six’s arguments from getting past local party meetings. Furthermore, the triumvirate struck back with harsh counter-accusations, concluding that Trotsky “had set himself

\(^{59}\) Deutscher, \textit{The Prophet Unarmed}, 115.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 118.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 119.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 121–122.

\(^{63}\) Deutscher, \textit{The Prophet Unarmed}, 123.
up as the chief, even if unconscious, agent of all the petty bourgeois elements which pressed upon the party from all sides, seeking to breach its unity and to inject into it their own moods, prejudices, and pretensions.”64

With the 1923 Opposition defeated, 1924 began with the unexpected death of Lenin on January 21. Shortly afterwards, the triumvirate used his death as an excuse to increase the numbers of the party’s “proletarian cells,”65 which had been one of Trotsky’s main arguments against the triumvirs. Termed “Lenin’s Levy,” it “was presented as a spontaneous homage of the working class to Lenin as the party’s rejuvenation” that, in reality, “supplied the triumvirs with a devoted clientele to which they presently appealed in the struggle against the opposition.”66

The beauty of the triumvirate’s, or more specifically Stalin’s, political tactics was not that they involved high ideological rhetoric, as Trotsky was apt to use. Instead, Stalin used Trotsky’s own ideas to further his political goals. This can be seen during the struggle for power in the promotion of the New Course and the introduction of Lenin’s Levy. Both were created in response to Trotsky’s October letter and the Declaration of the Forty-Six. However, each of Stalin’s “solutions” to the problems had their own twist that caused them to serve his agenda far more than Trotsky’s. The New Course was never de facto implemented and only served to bait Trotsky further into open debate, while Lenin’s levy added thousands of party members from the masses who owed their allegiance, not to Trotsky, but to Stalin.

Over the course of 1924, Trotsky would make two more major political mistakes in the public arena. In May 1924, the 13th Party Congress was held. It would be the first congress to be held without Lenin. The event gave Trotsky the opening to publicly defend himself against the

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64 Ibid., 125–126.
65 Proletarian cells refer to the proletarian (also known as worker) membership within the party, as opposed to the bureaucrats and former revolutionaries which held a monopoly over party affairs.
66 Ibid., 135–136.
triumvirate. Instead, the congress “turned into an orgy of denunciation,” with Zinov’ev demanding that “Trotskii should not merely ‘lay down arms’ but appear before the congress and recant.”\(^67\) In response to the denunciations, Trotsky’s speech during the congress used the English proverb “My country, right or wrong” to describe his opposition, saying “My party, right or wrong—wrong on certain partial, specific issues or at certain moments,” and ending “his plea by saying that he would accept the party’s verdict even if it were unjust.”\(^68\) The reaction to his speech was disastrous; the triumvirs denounced it, claiming that Trotsky was blasphemous for calling the party wrong on any issue.

Even more disastrous was Trotsky’s work, *Lessons of October* [Уроки октября], which he published in October of that year. Written as a preface for a collection of his writings and speeches from 1917, the work was supposed to celebrate the seventh anniversary of the October Revolution. However, under the guise of educating the populace about the history of 1917, Trotsky used the opportunity to personally attack the two less-threatening members of the triumvirate: Zinov’ev and Kamenev. On numerous occasions throughout the text, Trotsky points out the moments when Zinov’ev and Kamenev broke party discipline in opposition to the insurrection. In one example, he cites a letter Kamenev wrote a week before the revolution, which reads:

> “Not only Comrade Zinov’ev and I,” we read in this letter, “but also a number of practical comrades think that to assume the initiative of an armed insurrection at the present moment, with the given correlation of forces, independently of and several days before the Congress of Soviets, is an inadmissible step ruinous to the proletariat and to the revolution.”\(^69\)

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\(^{68}\) Ibid., 139.

\(^{69}\) “Ne tol’ko ia i tov. Zinov’ev,—govoritsia v etom pis’me,—no i riad tovarishchei-praktikov nakhodiat, chto vziat’ na sebia initsiativu vooruzhenogo vosstania v nastroisshchii moment, pri dannom sootnoshenii sil, nezavisimo i neskol’ko dni do C”ezda Covetov, bylo by nedopustimym, gibel’nym dlia proletariata i revoliutsii shagom.” Uroki Oktiabria. Translated by John G. Wright in *The Lessons of October*, 53.
The effect on Zinov’ev and Kamenev’s political careers was disastrous. Stalin, however, was left unmentioned. In one fell swoop, Trotsky had not only politically destroyed two of his enemies, whom Stalin was already beginning to move against, but had also left his most dangerous opponent untouched. For this reason, it seems that “Trotsky assisted Stalin’s scheme, inadvertently but decisively.”\textsuperscript{70} Of course, Stalin’s political machine worked furiously to counter Trotsky’s claims, publishing “at least thirty articles denouncing ‘Trotskyism’” in \textit{Pravda}.\textsuperscript{71} As a result of the denunciations, the triumvir knew that “they could not leave him in charge of the country’s military affairs. . . . They now openly worked to remove him from the Commissariat.”\textsuperscript{72} They were successful, and Trotsky lost his position as Commissar of War. However, he was allowed to keep his Politburo position, where he had no political allies, until 1926.

Trotsky’s political career was in shambles. Trotsky made poor political decisions while reforming his ideology to counter the power of the triumvirate and succeed Lenin as heir to the Soviet empire. Leaving the rest of his political and economic dogma intact, he attempted to change his image from party disciplinarian to the champion of the anti-Stalin, pro-democratic opposition. But he thereby violated party discipline and thus left himself open to political attacks. Despite Trotsky’s later oppositional efforts, Stalin’s now complete control over the party machine enabled him to fight Trotsky, and his victory became increasingly clear by 1925.

6. The Struggle between Wealth and Power

The 1998 economic crisis in Russia spelled financial ruin for several oligarchs when many of their flimsy yet massive companies and firms collapsed along with the value of the ruble. In the aftermath of the economic disaster, Khodorkovskii began his public makeover,

\textsuperscript{70} Kotkin, 563.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 64.
\textsuperscript{72} Deutscher, \textit{The Prophet Unarmed}, 160.
remaking his image as a western-style businessman who wanted more transparent and fair economic and political institutions in Russia. In regard to Khodorkovskii’s restructuring of Yukos following the crash, Sixsmith claims Khodorkovskii “now seemed determined to do things by the book. He wanted to make Yukos an open, transparent company with no secrets to hide. Instead of milking the firm for cash, he began to invest in its future.” However, it seems unlikely that Khodorkovskii would have wanted to restructure Yukos and change his public image for purely economic reasons. Under the current system, he had amassed massive profits with little accountability. Though his business practices may have caused Yukos to take a harder hit during the crisis, he had still retained much of his wealth as Yukos recovered.

The real reason for his sudden change of heart derived from the fact that President Yeltsin’s administration was failing. During the last years of his presidency, Eltsin’s approval ratings dipped to unprecedented levels as his embarrassing, drunken faux pas and corruption allegations caught up with him. The 1998 financial crisis spelled his political ruin. Moreover, Yeltsin was due to leave office at the end of his term in 2000. Without knowing who would become the next president, Khodorkovskii wanted to ensure that his position was secure. Because of this, Khodorkovskii, seeing the person who had allowed the oligarchy to rise and hold on to vast swathes of financial and political power leave, began his transformation.

When Vladimir Putin took over as president at the beginning of the new millennium, he began to change the rules of the laissez-faire system that had prevailed during Eltsin’s tenure. Putin’s rhetoric became increasingly anti-oligarchical in his opening months in office. Yet, for all Putin’s anti-oligarchic speeches, “he knew he needed the oligarchs almost as much as they needed him,” with oligarchs such as Boris Berezovskii funding his electoral campaign and

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73 Sixsmith, 47.
sponsoring his political party, Edinstvo.” Therefore, Putin famously offered the oligarchy the following deal:

In July 2000, he called the leading oligarchs into the Kremlin to explain the rules of the game under which they would be expected to operate. He said he would not interfere with their business activities and would not reverse the privatization process . . . as long as they agreed to stay out of politics. And that, he explained, meant they should not be funding political parties; they should not seek personal political power; and above all, they should not challenge or criticize the President.

To Khodorkovskii, this deal must have been alarming. After all, he had “benefited from his closeness to politicians . . . his backing for Boris Eltsin in 1996 had enabled him to acquire Yukos at auction.” Additionally, to gain more political capital, “In the 1999 parliamentary elections Yukos had openly bankrolled the campaigns” of multiple political parties, including two pro-western ones (Iabloko and The Union of Right Forces), Putin’s party (Edinstvo), and even secretly the Communist Party. In particular, “Vladimir Dubov, one of Yukos’s leading executives and a principal shareholder in Group Menatep . . . was voted into parliament . . . where he served openly as a supporter of the company.” Under Putin’s rule, Khodorkovskii’s lobbying influence in the Duma was threatened. In a meeting with the Duma on June 11, 2003, Putin, in a dialogue with the Speaker of the Duma, Gennady Seleznev, said the following:

I am against prison cells and arm-twisting, but the influence of business is such that these measures are sometimes necessary to use. . . . You see, even Gennady Nikolayevich draws attention to the fact that business is strengthening its influence on power. . . . That is, Yukos’s problem is in reality not economic-criminal, but purely political.

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74 Sixsmith, 45–46.
75 Ibid., 46.
76 Ibid., 52.
77 Ibid., 52.
78 Ibid., 52.
Of course, this was a thinly veiled threat to Yukos, implying that if the company—and by extension Khodorkovskii—did not stop its political maneuvers in the Duma, the Kremlin would be ready to punish them.

Meanwhile, Putin’s camp was campaigning against the oligarchy’s unfettered control over the oil industry, Russia’s most profitable enterprise. As they waged a rhetorical war against the oligarchy, they also began the reconsolidation of national oil resources by Russia’s “state oil company, Rosneft,” with Putin’s closest ally, Igor Sechin, at the head of its board. Though the government was able to make deals with some more Putin-friendly oligarchs, such as Roman Abramovich, they were unable to reach an agreement with Khodorkovskii, who “was determined to hold on to his empire . . . [and] began dropping very broad hints that he intended to swap the life of a businessman for that of a politician.”

Khodorkovskii, like Trotsky when he recognized that the triumvirate had conspired against him, saw that his own personal power was slipping and that his wealth might be in danger of being confiscated. Already, two oligarchs who had opposed Putin’s rule, Boris Berezovskii—who had ironically been one of Putin’s main political sponsors—and Vladimir Gusinskii, had lost their assets and fled the country in exile. Meanwhile, other oligarchs who were Putin’s friends and allies enjoyed special treatment under the new regime.

To grow his business and secure his wealth, the foundation of his power, Khodorkovskii needed political power. Roman Abramovich had just taken over as owner of Sibneft (Russia’s second largest oil producer, behind Yukos at this time) from the recently exiled Berezovskii. Khodorkovskii had been interested in buying a controlling stake back in 1998, but five years

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80 Sixsmith, 56–57.
81 Ibid., 57.
later, it seemed “that he was angling to revive the [takeover of] Sibneft.” At the same time, Khodorkovskii began to discover “the attraction of Western-style big power politics,” in which big business was able to influence and be a part of the government, without the high stakes—such as regular politically-motivated killings or prosecution—that made Russian politics so unpredictable. He started “to take an active part in social matters . . . the Russian media were beginning to speak of him as a potential future rival to the current President.”

In society, Khodorkovskii tried to change his reputation as a corrupt oligarch and, in 2001, founded a massive philanthropic project called Open Russia. Khodorkovskii’s primary goal for the organization was to improve his public image as he donated tens of millions of dollars, eventually donating “more money than any individual or organization in Russian history.” With his organization, Khodorkovskii used his money “to effect social change in Russia, not just patch up the failure of the current regime.” Open Russia funded many programs aimed at educating post-Soviet youth to bring Russia closer to a Western democracy. The organization was also generally anti-Putin, with Khodorkovskii emphasizing that the main purpose was to make Russia “normal,” as opposed to Putin’s Russia.

By remaking his public image as an ideologically-driven, open and responsible businessman, Khodorkovskii put himself on a direct collision course with Putin. Instead of focusing on merely buying Duma seats to defend his business interests, he seemed more intent on buying a parliamentary opposition voice to shift the balance of power against Putin’s presidency. He also began to hint in various publications about his potential future prospects in

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82 Ibid., 51–52.
83 Ibid., 52.
84 Ibid., 52.
85 Ibid., 78.
86 Ibid., 78.
87 Ibid., 79.
politics. In an article in Kommersant from 2002, when asked whether he would consider entering politics he said, “Why not? Indeed, I am 38 . . . I still have time.” He went on to state that “[m]oney is an instrument to be used for other things. It is an instrument like ammunition for the military.”\textsuperscript{88} Khodorkovskii discussed money in military terms, implying a power struggle was taking place. In particular, he hinted at his candidacy for president—exiting business at 45 would put him on course to challenge Putin in the 2008 elections. Khodorkovskii was publicly funding opposition parties and openly discussing the prospects for his own political career, possibly even as president.

Consequently, Putin’s administration became increasingly concerned about Khodorkovskii’s insolence and began to treat it seriously in public. In early 2003, Putin’s office believed that “Khodorkovskii was buying up votes in parliament in order to force through changes to the Russian Constitution” and that “Khodorkovskii then intended to instruct his parliamentary placemen to vote him into the newly strengthened position of Prime Minister.”\textsuperscript{89} In order to confront Khodorkovskii in a public forum, Putin invited the oligarchy to the Kremlin in a televised meeting on February 19 about the problems in Russia.

Under the guise of focusing on ridding Russian business of the corrupt practices that had defined it since the 90s, Putin goaded Khodorkovskii to make a move in a forum he controlled; it worked. Putin set the vague tone of the meeting by explaining that, “we are talking about the elimination of the base of corruption, establishing civilized partnerships between business and government.”\textsuperscript{90} During his presentation, Khodorkovskii offered a scathing assessment of corruption within the government, implicating Putin as an impediment to the country’s economic

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 57.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 57.
\textsuperscript{90} “Rech’ idet o likvidatsii samoi bazy korruptsii, ustanovlenii partnerskikh tsivilizovannykh otnoshenii mezhdu biznesom i gosudarstvom.” \textit{Pervyi kanal}. Translated by Ryan Wauson.
progress. Khodorkovskii questioned Rosneft’s acquisition of “a strategic oil extraction facility in the north of the country” for a “suspiciously high” price; “Khodorkovskii, among others, believed the excess payment had gone into the pockets of Putin and his Kremlin cronies.” Putin responded quickly, claiming that the acquisition had been a legal and responsible action, and then moved on the offensive:

> About the question of tax evasion, we’ve talked about this recently, yes? That your company has had problems with paying its taxes, but we need to pay tribute to the leadership of Yukos: the company has agreed with the Federal Tax Service, and has accepted all claims and closed all of its problems. This fixes all the issues with the state. But somehow these issues emerged in the first place . . . And now, the ball is in your court.

The statement was both a jab at Khodorkovskii for his past business and political dealings, as well as a threat of further repercussions. In a matter of minutes, Putin had succeeded in controlling Khodorkovskii’s outburst and making it appear that he was concerned about corruption.

In the midst of the struggle for power Khodorkovskii still pushed forward in the business sector, specifically the buyout of Putin ally Abramovich’s Sibneft. Khodorkovskii had tried to acquire the company back in 1998; this time Abramovich came to him. Just two weeks after his first public confrontation with Putin, Khodorkovskii was approached by Abramovich, who now wanted to sell Sibneft. Khodorkovskii was confident that he would gain the necessary approval from Putin’s administration, despite their public row.

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91 Sixsmith, 62.
92 “В том числе и вопросы неуплаты налогов. Мы с вами обсуждали, да? Совсем недавно. Чего и у вашей компании были проблемы с уплатой налогов, но надо отдать должное руководству компании “ЮКОС”: она договорилась с налоговой службой, приняла все претензии и закрыла все проблемы. Закрывает все проблемы с государством. Но как-то эти проблемы возникли. . . . Вот по-этому я возвращаю вашу ошибку.” Тоцильникова. Переведено Райан Уоусон.
93 Sixsmith, 74.
However, the Kremlin was not pleased when Khodorkovskii started to enlist the help of American energy companies in a partnership with Yukos. Even as Putin’s administration still tried to consolidate Russian oil resources, the oligarch who controlled the largest share in the sector was now allowing foreign energy firms to have access. Yet, ever the political strategist, Putin appeared to encourage Khodorkovskii’s plans, causing him to genuinely believe that “Putin was in favor of the deal.” In hindsight, the deal would prove to become Khodorkovskii’s key mistake, which Putin would take advantage of later in the year.

Putin’s apparatus continued its political assault. In May of the same year, Stanislav Belkovskii, “widely regarded as the ideologue of the Silovki [Putin’s political network],” gave a report, “entitled ‘The state and oligarchy,’ [that] painted a grim picture of the threat posed by the oligarchs to the interests of Russia and warned that the most dangerous of them was . . . Mikhail Khodorkovskii.” He claimed that through his power in the oil industry, Khodorkovskii was vying for political control of the country by trying to “undermine the power of the President and transform Russia from a presidential republic to a parliamentary republic.” When asked about the report, Putin agreed with its findings. However, Putin himself seemed to believe very little in the anti-oligarch rhetoric he pushed in the first couple years of his presidency. After all, “Putin had made no effort prior to 2003 to re-nationalize the state oil industry ‘privatized’ by the oligarchs under Boris Yeltsin,” since “Putin himself had made big personal fortunes from the ‘mutual recognition of privatization results.’” This suggests that the political battle was more personal than ideological. Putin, like Stalin, justified his power struggle through ideological terminology to create the appearance of some greater conflict. By creating an ideological base,

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94 Ibid., 76.
95 Ibid., 88.
96 Ibid., 65.
97 Ibid., 65.
98 Ibid., 68.
the two impressed upon their populaces that they were motivated, not by their own personal ambitions and battles, but by a higher, philosophical cause. In Stalin’s case, this “cause” was the creation of a successful Leninist-Marxist state; for Putin, it was the battle against corruption.

Despite Khodorkovskii’s efforts, Putin eroded his power bases of wealth and his network of political support by utilizing his fortune and oil industry ties over the course of 2003. Putin’s media machine worked to further tarnish Khodorkovskii’s public image. By this point, Putin’s administration viewed his public opposition, massive wealth, and dealings with foreigners to be too dangerous to be allowed to continue. In October 2003, Khodorkovskii sensed his freedom would soon be coming to an end and “was flying between regional governors and local politicians in Yukos’s Siberian heartlands, desperately trying to garner support.”

This tour was cut short when Khodorkovskii was arrested by the FSB, taken to Moscow, and put on trial. He was charged with tax evasion and fraud, charges that could be filed against any of the other oligarchs, as well as Putin himself. Of course, none of this mattered. In the coming years, Yukos’s spoils would be split among Putin and his allies, while Khodorkovskii lost his power base, his allies, and his freedom.

7. Conclusion

However different they may have been, the similarities between Trotsky and Khodorkovskii’s stories are very telling. They were both public figures at the highest reaches of power in political and economic systems they both contributed to creating: Trotsky, as a member of the Politburo and Commissar of War, and Khodorkovskii, as owner of Yukos and the richest man in Russia. This order suddenly changed when the figures that perpetuated those systems, Lenin and Eltsin, exited from power. As a result, underestimated challengers, Stalin and Putin, attempted to take control of their power bases for themselves. Feeling their hold on power was

99 Ibid., 139.
threatened, both Trotskii and Khodorkovskii began to reform their ideologies and to oppose these systems in hopes of shifting the balance of power. On one hand, Trotskii disavowed the bureaucracy, called for more inner-party democracy, and supported the lifting of the ban on factions. On the other hand, Khodorkovskii called for a more open political and economic system, liberalizing the country and freeing it from the hold of the oligarchy. In the end, both lost the struggle because they made poor political moves and, consequently, lost their bases of power. After this point, their rivals consolidated power as de facto victors. By studying their narratives, it becomes possible to understand the limited capabilities of any Russian opposition to compete with the faction in power. Even with their power and fame, both Trotskii and Khodorkovskii, who were the most influential oppositionists of their times, failed to wage successful struggles against Stalin and Putin.

This leads to the dark conclusion that an organized opposition cannot exist within the structural framework of Russia’s politics. In Western-style democracies, the opposition can freely dissent and reasonably expect to come to power or at least be a part of the decision-making process. The Russian political system allows for neither. In both the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia, the opposition is harassed, persecuted, and never allowed to exercise any real influence that would challenge the leading faction.

Once Stalin had consolidated his power in 1924, even the combined efforts of Trotskii, Zinov’ev, and Kamenev in the 1926–1927 United Opposition failed to remove him. Subsequently, Stalin either executed or exiled all of his former opponents. Trotskii was murdered in Mexico in 1940 on his orders. Similarly, with Khodorkovskii imprisoned, Putin completed his consolidation of power. He incorporated Yukos into state-owned Rosneft’s expanding portfolio while harassing, intimidating, and removing other oppositionists. Today, Putin is securely in
power with all substantial domestic opposition in shambles. Pardoned from prison in December 2013, Khodorkovskii currently lives abroad in exile. Though he continues his opposition against Putin, his support within Russia is nominal. Because of the domestic political conditions, it would take the complete economic collapse of the country or Putin’s physical incapacitation for there to be any possibility for an end to “Putin’s Russia.” Since neither of those scenarios currently seem likely, it would appear that, for the foreseeable future, Putin is here to stay.

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