

responds to M.F. Lacoste, who had published in *La Guêpe* an article on the subject in verse (90 alexandrines!), by a lengthy quotation from Zola's 'Mes Haines,'⁸⁴ a most appropriate choice in this journalistic squabble about the most controversial literary movement of the day.

* * *

It has been the purpose of this study to demonstrate to what extent these earliest of Laforgue's texts were inspired, if not directly influenced, by the poet whom he admired the most at the time he wrote them. For, although the importance of Heine's poetry, especially his early cycle 'Lyrisches Intermezzo,' in the development of Laforgue's poetry has been generally — if vaguely — recognized, the echoes of Heine's prose in that of Laforgue have so far been overlooked. But our reading of Laforgue's contributions to *La Guêpe* and *L'Enfer* in the light of Heine's 'Briefe aus Berlin' should redress the imbalance, as it has shown us how not merely Heine's poetry, but his prose, too, influenced Laforgue who, like his Master, was to distinguish himself as journalist and prose writer as well as poet. And while a consideration of Heine and Laforgue as prose parodists — for example, the *Reisebilder* and the *Moralités légendaires* — would exceed the scope of the present discussion, it has thrown light on Laforgue's aspirations to succeed in a genre which Heine had revolutionized. Thus we find Laforgue's earliest contributions to literary journalism both illuminated and overshadowed by the rich heritage from which they drew.

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Partisan Culture in the Thirties: *Partisan Review*, the Surrealists and Leon Trotsky*

1 TROTSKY'S LEGACY AS A MAN OF LETTERS

On 21 December 1937, Leon Trotsky wrote a letter to a member of the American section of the Trotskyist political organization, the Fourth International. This was three years before Trotsky was assassinated in Mexico, and five years after he had been deprived of his Soviet citizenship. The letter represents the first published evidence that Trotsky wanted to arrange for the sale of his 'archives' in the United States, to 'an American scientific Institute'.¹

At the time of writing Trotsky stipulated that the sale should be made with 'some conditions,' the major one being that 'certain documents should be guarded with all the necessary guarantees especially against the Stalinists and their agents and so on.'² He added that

it would be absolutely unreasonable to preserve these documents here in our home. To place them in a safe place would signify permanent expense. It is from every point of view preferable to sell them immediately under the above indicated conditions.³

The documents were finally sold to Harvard University in 1940, although both the Hoover Institution and the University of Chicago

* This paper is dedicated to Jean van Heijenoort (1912-1986). He died in Mexico City in March, 1986. His encouragement and his comments on this paper have been invaluable.

I want to acknowledge the generous assistance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the cooperation of Mr. Rodney Dennis and staff at the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

1 George Breitman, ed., *Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement II* (1934-40) (New York: Pathfinder 1979) 749-50

2 Breitman, 750

3 Ibid.

were also approached. And, consistent with Trotsky's request, the 'letters in exile' were closed to the public for a period of forty years. These letters represent approximately one third of the entire collection which is housed at Harvard's Houghton Library; that is, about 17,500 letters.⁴ They include letters written to and from Trotsky in at least four languages – French, Russian, German and English. Soon after the archives were opened Jean van Heijenoort, Trotsky's bodyguard in the late thirties and primary consultant to the Harvard collection, was interviewed by the news media. Richard Eder writes in *The New York Times*, 8 January 1980, that van Heijenoort

stressed that the main interest of the letters would probably be to provide not so much historical and political revelation as to [sic] a thorough understanding of Trotsky's extraordinary personality and the texture of his ideas.⁵

Having had a clue as to the non-political contents of the archives from Isaac Deutscher's biography of Trotsky,⁶ and from the occasional published letter in other sources, I went to Harvard's Houghton Library on 2 January 1980 in order to study the unpublished and published 'cultural correspondence', most of which was contained in the Exile Papers, or the 'Closed Section'. I learned that a significant number of documents were exchanged between Trotsky, or his representatives, and writers and artists around the world. These extra-literary documents reveal the links between Trotsky and American and European Marxist intellectuals and artists who became disenchanted with Soviet Communism and its theories of culture. The 'cultural radicals' then created their own literary avant-garde, and revised Marxist aesthetics to include notions of experiment and freedom. For them the word 'revolution' had other than a strictly political meaning. It had serious implications for the writer who saw his commitment fulfilled in direct relation to his contribution to preserving – to quote Philip Rahv, 1952 – 'the integrity of art and the intellect amidst the conditions of alienation brought on by the major social forces of the modern era.'⁷ The Trotsky Papers have been central to my contention that

4 Marvin Pave, 'Trotsky Letters are Unveiled,' *The Boston Globe* (3 January 1980) 2

5 Richard Eder, 'Trotsky's Letters Draw Wide Interest,' *The New York Times* (8 January 1980) A14

6 *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky: 1929-1940* (London: Oxford University Press 1970) 30 and 431-5. These references are also mentioned in Michael Sheringham, *André Breton: A Biography* (London: Grant and Cutler 1972) 87 and 110.

7 Philip Rahv, *Literature and the Sixth Sense* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1960) 182

among the correspondents there emerged the roots of a 'new Marxist aesthetic,' which in turn set the ground for many avant-garde movements in the West.

This 'new Marxist aesthetic' did not develop with the consistency and rigour of a scientific project. It developed out of the *Realpolitik* of a community of intellectuals and artists whose quest for truth was influenced by both political and aesthetic concerns. Their vision of the communist future was shattered by the realities of Stalinism and the rise to power of Hitler, but their commitment to a better world continued. The common link among them was Leon Trotsky who was the only revolutionary leader to have explored questions of art and culture during the crisis in the Communist Party in the Soviet Union in the twenties. Trotsky, to the surprise of many – including T.S. Eliot – wrote *Literature and Revolution* in 1923/1924 when political debate was raging in the Party. Eliot muses that men of letters often take on 'literary professions' in order to 'revive sinking fires and rehabilitate' their professions. But,

there is no such obvious reason why a man like Trotsky should take the trouble to pronounce upon the literature of revolution and the literature of the future; the only reason that occurs to me in reading his book is that he may have been exasperated by the futilities of previous Russian writers upon the subject.⁸

In his recent book, *A Margin of Hope* (1982), Irving Howe asks the question: 'How strong had Stalinism really been in the American intellectual world during the thirties?' He continues:

Was it, as becalmed liberals like to say, a mere marginal eruption confined to a few big cities – the very cities, as it happened, in which our cultural life was concentrated? Or was it true that communist cadres had often taken control of major cultural institutions?⁹

Howe concludes that there 'are no reliable statistics' with which to answer the questions, and, moreover, 'the quantitative approach is mostly beside the point.'¹⁰ Howe does say that 'to ask the question is to an-

8 *The Criterion* (January 1933) 245

9 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1982) 128

10 *Ibid.*

swer it: at least until the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, cultural Stalinism had become a significant power in the United States, not unchecked or unchallenged, but exerting far greater influence than its numbers might suggest.¹¹ If cultural Stalinism represented a real force, then we must credit the left opposition with the challenges and checks against it. Remembering that the opposition was often underground, wary of attacks from both the left and the right, one can understand the courage it took to write to Trotsky in the period of his exile. Nevertheless, Trotsky corresponded with at least 43 intellectuals in America and France, and the correspondence was usually initiated by the intellectuals. These intellectuals included artists, actors, poets, critics, editors and publishers; they included people as diverse as André Breton and Earle Birney, and as similar as James T. Farrell and Philip Rahv.

Although scholars have begun to explore the rise of 'cultural radicalism' as an international challenge to 'cultural Stalinism,' full length studies do not exist. The scholarship on the American avant-garde, however, has been instrumental in establishing the political and aesthetic norms which operated during the critical years of the thirties. This scholarship includes primarily James Burkhardt Gilbert's *Writers and Partisans* (1968),¹² Alan M. Wald's *James T. Farrell: The Revolutionary Socialist Years* (1978),¹³ William Barrett's *The Truants: Adventures Among the Intellectuals* (1982),¹⁴ and, Irving Howe's *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography* (1982).¹⁵ David Caute's 1973 study of *The Fellow-Travelers: A Postscript to the Enlightenment* is the only book which attempts to be international in scope, but it does not credit Trotsky with any influence over intellectual relationships, or their political consequences in the thirties.¹⁶ The only book which presents the exiled Trotsky from a personal point of view, and includes comments on his relationships with European artists, is Jean van Heijenoort's *With Trotsky in Exile* (1978).¹⁷ Alongside van Heijenoort's book we must place Irving Howe's sympathetic study of Trotsky in the Fontana Modern

11 *A Margin of Hope*, 129

12 (New York: John Wiley 1968)

13 (New York: New York University Press 1978)

14 (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday 1982)

15 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1982)

16 (New York: Macmillan 1973)

17 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1978)

Masters series (1978), because it was the first book of its kind to discuss Trotsky as a man with other than political interests.¹⁸

This paper concentrates on a single decade, the thirties, because it is during this decade that obvious links are established in the cultural correspondence between the Surrealists, *Partisan Review*, (PR), and Leon Trotsky. It is also during this decade that splits and debates occur within the same movements, one side going with Trotsky, one side going with Stalin or, in America, with more liberal tendencies. Although the split-offs are historically significant, this paper focuses only on the pro-Trotsky groups and individuals.

We must remember that developments in PR lagged behind those of the Surrealists. The blanket use of the term 'the thirties' is not always accurate for both groups. Breton, for example, first acted on his inspiration for Trotsky in 1925, when he read Trotsky's biography of Lenin. PR, however, began to reassess its Stalinist editorial policy in 1934, but did not come in contact with Trotsky until 1937, when it declared itself a dissident Marxist voice at war with the Stalinists.

That being said, this paper posits a triangle of cultural correspondence which becomes – at different times in different countries – dominated by the selfsame ideology. The ideology to which I refer here is rooted in Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution, a political and social theory which has profound implications for the development of a revolutionary culture. Trotsky condenses the theory in his 1929 introduction to *The Permanent Revolution*. He writes:

The permanent revolution, in the sense which Marx attached to this concept, means a revolution which makes no compromise with any single form of class rule, which does not stop at the democratic stage, which goes over to socialist measures and to war against reaction from without; that is, a revolution whose every successive stage is rooted in the preceding one and which can end only in the complete liquidation of class society.¹⁹

For a very long time, and in continual internal struggle, all social rela-

18 (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins 1978)

19 Translated from Russian by John G. Wright (New York: Pathfinder 1969) 130-1.

Although the introduction from which I quote was written in 1929, the first Russian edition of *The Permanent Revolution* was published in 1930 in Berlin, the first English translation in New York in 1931. (The term 'permanent revolution' was first used by Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-81), although Karl Marx referred to the concept in his 1850 *Address to the Communist League*.)

tions, and all elements of the superstructure, undergo constant change in reciprocal action to each other. Art, literature and culture – alongside science, the family, morals, religion – are part of the superstructure, and react accordingly.

Although Leon Trotsky developed the theory of Permanent Revolution, and formed part of the new Soviet government as People's Commissar of War (1918-1925), he is too often remembered as Joseph Stalin's worst political opponent and scapegoat, murdered by one of Stalin's agents in Mexico on 20 August 1940. Trotsky is not usually thought of as a literary man, or a man who, as early as 1923, produced a theoretical study of the relationship of literature to revolution. *Literature and Revolution* was, however, worthy of the early attention of men of letters as reputed in literary scholarship as F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot.²⁰ Both men, while disputing the general philosophy of Marxism, respected Trotsky's book for its intelligent and consistent argument. It is my contention that Trotsky – without intending it – produced the cultural parallel of Permanent Revolution in the theories put forward in *Literature and Revolution*, theories which deserve scholarly attention. And, more importantly, Trotsky had the opportunity to put these theories into practice in the thirties during his relationships with certain groups within the anti-Stalinist intelligentsia. Moreover, these theories are reflected in the correspondence between Trotsky, the Surrealists and the New York intellectuals close to PR, and in the manifestoes which were produced in the course of their relationships. The surrealist movement, then, and PR, also without intention – subscribed to the cultural equivalent of Permanent Revolution.

Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*²¹ represents his earliest contribution to cultural theory and literary criticism. Although Trotsky never entirely forgets his commitment to politics, his commitment to art and culture as essentially non-political entities is always present. Notwithstanding the primacy of the economic life of the 'proletarian régime,' he maintains that 'the development of art is the highest test of the vi-

²⁰ See Leavis, 'Under Which King, Bezonian?', *Scrutiny* (December 1932) 205-14, and T.S. Eliot, 'A Commentary,' *The Criterion* (January 1933) 244-9.

²¹ The authoritative English translation of this book is published in the series of Ann Arbor Paperbacks for the study of Communism and Marxism (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1960 and 1975). It was translated by Rose Strunsky, and dedicated to Christian Rakovsky. It was originally published in Moscow in 1924. A later edition was published by Russel and Russel in 1957, but it does not credit the translator.

talities and significance of each epoch.'²² In this sense he sees the art and culture of the régime as the signpost of its success as a truly socialist state. As such the new culture cannot be forced or prescribed. He fearlessly declares that 'there is no proletarian culture' and 'there never will be any and in fact there is no reason to regret this.'²³

Trotsky's reasoning is not complex: the dictatorship of the proletariat is temporary; the proletariat needs time after the revolution (perhaps, decades) to usurp power in order to ensure that more urgent needs are met; when there is time for 'cultural reconstruction,' the proletariat will have 'dissolved into a Socialist community' and will free itself from its class characteristics; and, thus, the proletariat will cease to be a proletariat.²⁴ Trotsky declares that in its essence, 'the dictatorship of the proletariat is not an organization for the production of the culture of a new society, but a revolutionary and military system struggling for it.'²⁵ Thus it is a misnomer to use the word 'proletarian' to describe a culture, and, moreover, the ideal culture is classless. The proletariat is a class which, however hard it might struggle to win power, does not aim to keep it.²⁶

At least two features set Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution* apart from the more orthodox Marxist literary theory. First, in his essay on 'The Formalist School of Poetry and Marxism,' Trotsky makes it clear that he does not view art as simply a weapon in the class struggle. He says:

It is very true that one cannot always go by the principles of Marxism in deciding whether to reject or to accept a work of art. A work of art should, in the first place, be judged by its own law, that is, by the law of art.²⁷

In this sense, Trotsky is not dogmatic in his assessments of cultural change. Politics and literature, of course, have an interdependent relationship, but this does not mean that the latter serves the former.

Second, Trotsky shows an appreciation for psychoanalysis as a valid method of interpreting certain psychological phenomena. In his essay on 'Pre-Revolutionary Art,' he refers to the teachings of the Austrian

²² *Literature and Revolution*, 9

²³ Op. cit. 185-6

²⁴ Op. cit. 184-6

²⁵ Op. cit. 190

²⁶ Op. cit. 195

²⁷ Op. cit. 178

psychoanalysts in order to discredit the Russian essayist and critic, Vasily Vasilyevich Rozanov. Trotsky's view is that psychoanalysis is not as valueless as the Soviet Marxists would have us believe. He says that

The Austrian psycho-analytic school (Freud, Jung, Albert Adler and others) made an immeasurably greater contribution to the question of the role of the sex-element in the forming of individual character and of social consciousness. In fact, there can be no comparison here. Even the most paradoxical exaggerations of Freud are much more significant and fertile than the broad surmises of Rozanov who constantly falls into intentional half-wittedness, or simply babble, repeats himself, and lies for two.²⁸

Trotsky does not wholly agree with his comrades that art is a 'hammer'; he insists that art is both 'hammer' and 'mirror.' He asks, 'if one cannot get along without a mirror, even in shaving oneself, how can one reconstruct oneself or one's life, without seeing oneself in the "mirror" of literature?'²⁹

Over and above Trotsky's acceptance of the compatibility of psychology and Marxism, and his respect for the inner laws of art, Trotsky also diverged from the orthodox Soviet *littérateurs* when he defended avant-garde elements in Russian literature. In *Literature and Revolution*, and in various essays in *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art*, and in the last two volumes of his untranslated *Collected Writings*,³⁰ Trotsky reiterates that many new artistic movements and styles will develop in the post-revolutionary period.³¹ These movements and styles are,

²⁸ Op. cit. 42-3

²⁹ Op. cit. 137

³⁰ *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art*, edited and introduced by Paul N. Siegel (New York: Pathfinder 1970). The *Collected Writings* [Со́чинения] were published in Moscow in 1926, and have been preserved by Columbia University Press on microfilm. Volume xx includes essays on nineteenth-century Russian literature, on Tolstoy, Gogol, Ouspensky and Dobrolybov, and also on writers in the West (including Ibsen and Hauptmann). The last section, written between 1908 and 1914, is entitled 'The West and Us,' and probes relations between Russian and European intellectuals. Volume xxi is devoted to popular culture, the media and controversial Russian novels, such as Zamyatin's *We*.

³¹ *Literature and Revolution*, 13-14; 'Culture and Socialism in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art,' pp. 38-91; and, 'Art and Revolution,' *Partisan Review* (August 1938).

moreover, connected to a larger tradition, which cannot be cut off.³² The artist must be in tune with his epoch, however contradictory his experience may be.³³ It is Trotsky's view that the Russian fellow-travellers – the Serapion Fraternity, Sergey Yessenin and the Imagists, Boris Pilnyak, Yevgeny Zamyatin and the 'Peasant-Singing Poets,' the Futurists and the Constructivists – can be criticized, but they cannot be forced into silence by fiat, law or prison.³⁴ Regretting the fate of his own Russian culture, Trotsky kept trying to prevent either censorship or liberalism among his comrades and his disciples. In the thirties he directed his attention toward the new PR and the Surrealists, inspired by his never-ending zeal and hope that some day Marxism and art would intersect to the advantage of both.

II THE NEW PARTISAN REVIEW

In his book, *Starting Out in the Thirties*, Alfred Kazin claims that 'the Thirties in literature were the age of the plebes – of writers from the working class, the lower class, the immigrant class, the non-literate class, from western farms and mills – those whose struggle was to survive.' The Twenties, by contrast, reminded one of 'rebels from "good" families – Dos Passos, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Cummings, Wilson, Cowley.'³⁵ The Thirties, Kazin proudly boasts, constituted a 'revolutionary yet wholly literary tradition in American writing,' an 'intellectual Socialist' tradition to which he belonged alongside writers as renowned as James T. Farrell, Philip Rahv, Dwight Macdonald, V.F. Calverton, and John Wheelwright.

Besides class and ethnic background, these writers shared a certain Marxist world view which was endemic to the period, and the place. If they had at one time belonged to the Communist Party, (C.P.U.S.A.), they no longer did by 1936, the year in which the trumped-up Moscow Trials began. At that time their overall concept of the Soviet Union, the country in which the revolution of 1917 had been 'successful,' was challenged, and their commitment to socialism became a difficult ques-

³² *Literature and Revolution*, 179

³³ *Literature and Revolution*, 12

³⁴ The essay, 'The Literary "Fellow-Travellers" of the Revolution,' addresses this problem. See *Literature and Revolution*, 56-115. Irving Howe says that this idea that art cannot be called into existence by fiat, and also that there is a relation between cultural upsurge and political decadence, is 'crucial to the serious study of modernism though not, unfortunately, elaborated by Trotsky' (p. 88).

³⁵ (Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1965) 12

tion. As far as cultural questions were concerned, these writers developed notions about the role of art in industrial societies, and the idea of a 'progressive art,' in the 1920s. As Alan Wald has explained in his study of James T. Farrell, the intellectual origins of 'the outstanding Trotskyist and left-wing anti-Stalinist writers of the 1930s began with the independent assimilation of certain social and cultural notions in the 1920s.³⁶ These notions grew out of a respect for the autonomy of art, even in the capitalist world. Philip Rahv, Farrell himself, Dwight Macdonald, other editors of *PR*, and various other New York intellectuals were part of this intelligentsia. As with other groups of intellectuals, they were bound together by the fact that they were conscious of being part of a community which continued the work of the twenties in attempting to fuse politics and art.³⁷ They had a 'sense,' according to Raymond Williams,³⁸ of being a 'distinct and self-conscious group' despite the fact that the group was made up of diverse artists, writers and intellectuals. The New York intelligentsia came to include the editors of *PR*, the poets who were published in it and other smaller magazines, and the artists, like Diego Rivera, who were friendly to it and thus were part of its periphery. As further discussion will reveal, the links between the New York circle and the European Surrealists, both part of a broader intelligentsia with international ties and internationalist politics, were forged by the critical and central position of Leon Trotsky and his political aspiration to stimulate an 'alternative' revolutionary political movement the world over.

As the decade progressed, and world political relations became ever more strained, this intelligentsia found itself less committed to the Soviet version of socialism, and more committed to the liberation of 'Marxist socialism from the Stalinists.'³⁹ Wald describes the momentum of the Thirties aptly:

The Moscow Trials unfolded at the same time as the Spanish Civil War, the sweep of the Popular Front in France, and the growing fear of fascism against

³⁶ James T. Farrell: *The Revolutionary Socialist Years* (New York: New York University Press 1978) 7

³⁷ John P. Diggins refers to 'The Lyrical Left' of the twenties and explains how it was the first of the movements to fuse art and politics during a period of relative optimism. See *The American Left in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1973) 73-106

³⁸ See *Keywords* (London: Croom Helm 1976) 141-2, for definitions.

³⁹ Alfred Kazin, *Starting Out in the Thirties*, 65

which the Soviet Union seemed a bulwark. In the course of the four trials between 1936 and 1938, Leon Trotsky and other Old Guard Bolsheviks were charged with plotting to assassinate Stalin and other Soviet leaders; conspiring to wreck the Soviet Union's economic and military power; working from the inception of the Revolution for espionage services of Britain, France, Japan and Germany; and making secret agreements with Hitler and the Mikado to cede vast slices of Soviet territory to imperialist Germany and Japan. The Moscow Trials, as James Farrell marked down in his diary in early 1937, drew a "line of blood" across the decade and the intellectual left.⁴⁰

Desperate for political clarity and unity, and at the same time fervent believers in the American literary tradition, these men — and the few women among them, including Mary McCarthy and Jack London's daughter, Joan — awkwardly battled on both the political and cultural fronts. They established and joined committees of one sort or another — the Non-Partisan Labor Defense Committee (1934-36), the Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky (1936), the John Dewey Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Against Leon Trotsky, the F.I.A.R.I. (Fédération Internationale d'Art Revolutionnaire Indépendant), and other progressive writers' unions and circles.

The group was isolated from both the orthodox far left, and the right, precisely at a time when the two poles seemed to become friendly toward each other. Kazin talks about how many of the New York left resisted the temptation to support the Popular Front even when the editors of *Collier's* welcomed Stalin 'as the only responsible leader of the time.'⁴¹ The intellectual and political alienation which these 'prema-ture anti-Stalinists,' as Kazin calls them, experienced in the Thirties motivated them, inspired them, and bound them together. If they were going to be prohibited from publishing in the pages of *Nation*, *New Republic*, and even *Life* magazine, then they would have to strengthen the editorial board of *PR*, and support experimental projects in the 'little magazine' industry of that era. (*Pulse*, edited by Kenneth Patchen and Harvey Breit, is a good example.⁴²) That industry is the focus of James Burkhart Gilbert's *Writers and Partisans*, 'a history of assumptions about

⁴⁰ Alan Wald, James T. Farrell: *The Revolutionary Socialist Years*, 58

⁴¹ Kazin, 65

⁴² See Edward E. Chielens, *The Literary Journal in America, 1900-1950*. A guide to Information Sources (Detroit: Gale Research 1977). Patchen wrote to Trotsky for editorial advice in 1938. Letter (3717) in the collection, b MS Russian 13.1. Only the letter number will be enclosed in parentheses hereafter.

literature and the role of the intellectual seen through an important institution, the little magazine.⁴³

Rahv, Macdonald, Farrell and others had begun to make a name for themselves in New York City as early as 1926, the year that Leon Trotsky formed the Joint Opposition with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Stalin. In the same year the vituperative Michael Gold founded the Communist *New Masses*, a magazine openly hostile to the veteran *Modern Quarterly*: *A Journal of Radical Opinion*, edited by Victor Francis Calverton (pseudonym of George Goetz).⁴⁴ Calverton was part of a smaller group of intellectuals whose 'main object became that of constructing an active left wing opposition to the Stalinists.'⁴⁵ Calverton corresponded with Trotsky in the thirties, and entered into a public dialogue with him in the *Modern Monthly* in 1932 on the nature of revolutionary intellectuals.⁴⁶ But by 1937 their relationship had soured, and Trotsky no longer trusted him. Nevertheless, in the early thirties, Calverton and his friends supported the idea, current among the leading minds in *PR*, that 'avant-garde literature and radical politics, since they both challenged bourgeois society, were two aspects of a larger theme: a rebellious civilization dedicated to the destruction of the old.'⁴⁷

43 (New York: John Wiley 1968) vii

44 *New Masses* became the leading radical literary periodical before 1930. It was famous for its virulent attacks on other leftwing literary journals which it considered revisionist or 'bohemian.' Its favourite targets were Max Eastman's *Masses*, and V.F. Calverton's *Modern Monthly* (sometimes called the *Modern Quarterly*, from 1923 to 1932, and 1938 to 1940). When Eastman was attacked because of his 'Greenwich Village art rebellion,' he replied in *Modern Monthly* in 1934 that the editors of the *New Masses* 'by contrast are carrying forward the banner of proletarian revolution ... a piece of fabricated balihoo from start to finish.' Calverton, too, was 'one of the maverick leftist editors of the 1920s and 1930s, promoting black radical literature.'

45 Wald, 6. This group included Meyer Schapiro and James Rorty, both of whom corresponded with Trotsky in the thirties. Schapiro, in fact, sent Trotsky 'some of Breton's books' in 1938 (10020), and Rorty worked on the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky in 1937 (4303-4304).

46 (March 1933) 82-5

47 James Gilbert, 'Literature and Revolution in the United States: The *Partisan Review*,' *Journal of Contemporary History: Literature and Society* 2, ii (April 1967) 162. Gilbert uses the word 'avant-garde' – as he says the editors of *PR* did –

to designate a group of modern writers including James Joyce, Marcel Proust, T.S. Eliot, Franz Kafka, etc. For a better explanation of why intellectuals joined and later quit the communist movement, see Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, World 1961).

It would, however, be two years before *PR* expressly questioned the progress of Soviet society, and its increasing bureaucratization.

PR began in February/March 1934 as a bi-monthly 'of Revolutionary Literature,' and 'the organ of the John Reed Club ... , the oldest and largest Club in the country ... It will publish the best creative work of its members as well as of non-members who share the literary aims of the John Reed Club.'⁴⁸ The Club was named in honour of John Silas Reed, author of the popular eyewitness account of the Russian Revolution, *Ten Days That Shook the World*.⁴⁹

The editorial statement of the first issue of *PR* reveals the magazine's politico-cultural aspirations, and its ongoing commitment to the Soviet Union. It begins: '*Partisan Review* appears at a time when American literature is undergoing profound changes.' Full of optimism, it continues:

We propose to concentrate on creative and critical literature, but we shall maintain a definite viewpoint – that of the revolutionary working class. Through our specific literary medium we shall participate in the struggle of workers and sincere intellectuals against imperialist war, fascism, national and racial oppression, and for the abolition of the system which breeds these evils. The defense of the Soviet Union is one of our principal tasks. (p. 1)

Sympathies with Stalin and the Soviet Union were reaffirmed in the seventh issue of *PR*, April-May 1935, when it presented 'a united creative front on the eve of the first Congress of American Writers' with the fourth number of *Dynamo*, edited by a lesser known leftist, Stephen Foster. The editorial statement is entitled 'Forward to the Great Alliance,' and is full of jargon which Rahv – as we shall see later – was never to condone after 1936. The First Congress of American Writers, it says,

will accelerate the secession of American intellectuals from the apologetics and chaos which capitalism nurtures in culture, and will set the frame for a more profound and more extensive revolutionary literature. It will be a stirring political demonstration of the great battle-alliance of intellectuals and the exploited masses against fascism and war ... Foremost as a source of revolutionary tradition looms the Soviet Union, with its gigantic cultural and economic achieve-

48 Editorial, 1

49 (New York: Boni and Liveright 1919). For more information about Reed's influence, see John P. Diggins, 96-100.

ments in the sphere of socialist construction, its consistent struggle for world peace, and the hope it holds for the liberation of humanity (p. 304).

In this same issue ensues a discussion on 'What is a Proletarian Novel?', wherein James T. Farrell criticizes a growing determinism among 'revolutionary critics.' He says that they wrongly 'make the relationship between culture and economics direct and immediate, and this is an inadequate assumption, and it is foreign to the thought of Marx, as I understand Marx's writings [he refers to *A Treatise on Political Economy*] (pp. 13-14). Even Rahv and Wallace Phelps (the alias of William Phillips) criticize artists who 'are guilty of an excessive rationalism,' who 'present reality geometrically, rather than as a living flux,' in their essay on 'Criticism' (pp. 16-25).

The editorial board of the first issue of *PR* included the three East European Jewish editors and poets, Joshua Kunitz, Edward Dahlberg (both listed with the John Reed Club Writers' School in 1929), and Philip Rahv. Rahv, however, was the only one to last into 1936 when *PR* combined with another small revolutionary magazine, *Anvil*, edited by Jack Conroy. Conroy, who also edited *Rebel Poet* from 1931 to 1932, and *New Anvil* from 1939 to 1940, had at this time maintained a running feud with the Communist Party. He thought that it had manipulated the early death of the first *Anvil*, and, so, disapproved of the merger with *PR*. Chielens quotes Conroy as having said that the merger provided the Party with space for 'the dialectical gymnastics so dear to the hearts of the New York intelligentsia.'⁵⁰ In the editorial statement of the February 1936 issue, the editors modestly said:

With this issue, *Partisan Review* and *Anvil* are combining to publish a new literary monthly. Though continuing the traditions of its predecessors, the new magazine will be broader in scope and, we believe, more mature. We invite contributions from the country over, and letters from readers on their reactions to our policy as well as specific stories, poems, and articles. (p. 2)

By 1936 it is clear that *PR* wanted to be even broader in scope, and more European in content. Alongside new names in American letters — such as the communist author of *Daughter of Earth*, Agnes Smedley, and the author of *The Executioner Waits*, Josephine Herbst — *PR* published the Soviet novelist, Ilya Ehrenbourg, the 'famous literary exile from fascist Italy,' Ignazio Silone, the vacillating surrealist-cum-

⁵⁰ Chielens, 8

party-man, Louis Aragon and the French writer and voyageur to both the Congo (in 1925) and the Soviet Union (in 1936), André Gide. (It was at this time that Pierre Naville and André Breton were trying to win Gide over to the anti-Stalinist camp in Paris. It is clear in a letter [1936] from Trotsky to Naville, dated 28 January 1938, that the Trotskyist movement was assessing Gide and his position on the U.S.S.R.)⁵¹ Gide's books were occasionally the subject of the exile correspondence, eliciting as they did a row among the communists. *Le Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* and its sequel, *Retouches à mon retour de l'U.R.S.S.*, were very critical of the Soviet system, complaining of 'dreadful uniformity, facile conformism, idolatry of Stalin, brutal indoctrination, ignorance of the outside world, repression exercised by the dictatorship of a few men, artistic bigotry, fear of originality, exploitation of the workers, etc.'⁵²

Silone's novel, *Fontamara*, and his early disillusionment with orthodox communism, provided a good platform for the political and social ideas of many of the editors of *PR*. One cannot overlook the fact that *Fontamara* appeared in 1933 — five years after Silone had broken with the Communist Party, and the same year as Malraux's important *La Condition humaine*.⁵³ Though the authors developed different political points of view, both novels described facets of oppressed man's struggle for dignity in a world which seems to offer no choices. After Malcolm Cowley — literary editor of *New Republic* in 1934 — reviewed both these books in the magazine, most socialist intellectuals referred to them as signposts of a new literary tradition, a sincere *Tendenzliteratur*.⁵⁴

Alfred Kazin says that Cowley, in his capacity as literary editor, shaped 'the literary side of the *New Republic* in the direction of a sophisticated literary Stalinism, since for Cowley, "revolution" was not the new stage of development.'⁵⁵ *Fontamara* and *La Condition humaine* were the

⁵¹ My source is letter Rus b MS 13.1 (9356) in the Trotsky Archives. Unless otherwise mentioned, all of the unpublished correspondence and some of the published correspondence is from this collection, b MS Russian, 13.1.

⁵² David Caute, *Communism and the French Intellectuals: 1914-1960* (London: André Deutsch 1964) 238

⁵³ *Fontamara*. Trans. Harvey Ferguson, foreword by Malcolm Cowley (New York: Atheneum 1960); *La Condition humaine*. Édition revue et corrigée (Paris: Galimard 1946). See also Kazin, 18.

⁵⁴ *Tendenz* is defined as a kind of *Realismus* by Engels in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Über Kunst und Literatur* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1967) 157.

⁵⁵ Kazin, 16. Trotsky was infuriated by *New Republic's* 'Stalinist' ideology during the Moscow Trials. In a letter to the anarchist, Carlo Tresca, 6 October 1937, he

'brilliant new revolutionary novels' which he used to bolster his political ideas, ambiguous though these ideas were. In spite of Cowley, and because these two novels had achieved such authority in left circles, *PR* turned some of its energies toward Europe, too, thereby alleviating the pressure of politics at home, and attracting Trotsky and his followers. The novels were so important, however, that even Trotsky paid them homage in short reviews. *Fontanarum*, he says, is 'remarkable,' informed by 'Marxist method,' and a 'truly artistic work.' It is interesting to note that Trotsky does not call *Fontanarum* a Marxist novel, nor a radical or proletarian novel. He calls it 'revolutionary,' and says that it must be published in the U.S.S.R.⁵⁶ (We will see later that the Surrealists, too, use the same word to describe what they consider progressive art.) The publication of *Fontanarum* in the U.S.S.R. would have, of course, been prevented by censors.

In spite of these new developments in the magazine, however, *PR* could not maintain its level of optimism, nor its bank account, the consequence of which was that it did not publish again until the end of 1937. At that time there were only three editors remaining: Alan Calmer, William Phillips, and Philip Rahv. Not only did the editors feel that the Popular Front was 'a betrayal of political and cultural radicalism,' but, as James Gilbert says, 'The Moscow Trials and the progress of the Spanish Civil War were indications to the editors of *Partisan* as well as to other American intellectuals that the Soviet Union had deeply compromised its leadership of the international working class.' Thus,

While the communists were gathering liberal sympathizers on the basis of their cultural Popular Front, the editors of *Partisan* remained constant in their original desire to find a common ground between radical politics and avantgarde literature. Discouraged by the failure of the proletarian movement and the fading of their hopes for a revolutionary new culture, and struggling with financial difficulties, they suspended publication of the magazine for a year.⁵⁷

Then in December of 1937, a new issue of *PR* appeared, with an avantgarde cover design — a Roszak test by Theodore J. Roszak. The magazine also included a new 'department' called 'Ripostes,' devoted to 'brief

says: 'The executioner is hideous, but more hideous is the priest (*New Republic*) in the service of the executioner' (19588 and 10589).

⁵⁶ See Trotsky's review in *Trotsky on Literature and Art*, 205-6.

⁵⁷ 'Literature and Revolution in the United States,' *Journal of Contemporary History: Literature and Society* (April 1967) 168

editorial comment and to communications,' a forum for the new intellectual and political battles to be fought as the magazine came closer to a version of 'Trotskyist' politics and a new cultural vision.

Because it was so controversial in its day, and because it marks the great change *PR* was to make in its attitude toward art and politics in the modern period, the 1937 editorial statement is a significant departure from other communist documents. Although *PR* commits itself to 'revolutionary' literature, it also claims unequivocal independence of any political organizations. It attributes a 'totalitarian trend' in the arts to the American Communist Party and its literary critics, and absolves itself of that trend. It insinuates that a regrouping of young left-leaning artists is in the making, and *PR* will be the organ of its expression. *PR* 'aspires to represent a new and dissident generation in American letters,' with a new commitment to democracy, freedom of expression, anti-censorship politics and political and cultural autonomy — all political concepts that are associated with Trotsky in his exile period. In particular, these concepts are linked with Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution, most cogently articulated by Trotsky when he defended himself against Stalin's 'socialism in one country' in 1930. Revolutionary literature represents the cultural flowering of the new generation whose faith lies in a revolution which is international and permanent. *PR*'s editorial begins by associating the term 'revolutionary' with the term 'independent':

... Any magazine, we believe, that aspires to a place in the vanguard of literature today, will be revolutionary in tendency; but we are also convinced that any such magazine will be unequivocally independent. *PARTISAN REVIEW* is aware of its responsibility to the revolutionary movement in general, but we disclaim obligation to any of its organized political expressions. Indeed we think that the cause of revolutionary literature is best served by a policy of no commitments to any political party ...

There is already a tendency in America for the more conscious social writers to identify themselves with a single organization, the Communist Party; with the result that they grow automatic in their political responses but increasingly less responsible in an artistic sense. And the Party literary critics, equipped with the zeal of vigilantes, begin to consolidate into aggressive political-literary amalgams as many tendencies as possible and to outlaw all dissenting opinion. This projection on the cultural field of factionalism in politics makes for literary cleavages, which, in most instances, have little to do with literary issues, and which are more and more provocative of a ruinous bitterness among writers. Formerly associated with the Communist Party, *PARTISAN REVIEW*

strove from the first against its drive to equate the interests of literature with those of factional politics. Our reappearance on an independent basis signifies our conviction that the totalitarian trend is inherent in that movement and that it can no longer be combatted from within.

But many other tendencies exist in American letters, and these we think, are turning from the senseless disciplines of the official Left to shape a new movement. The old movement will continue and, to judge by present indications, it will be reinforced more and more by academicians from the universities, by yesterday's celebrities and today's philistines. Armed to the teeth with slogans of revolutionary prudence, its official critics will revive the petty-bourgeois tradition of gentility, and with each new tragedy on the historic level they will call the louder for a literature of good cheer. Weak in genuine literary authority but equipped with all the economic and publicity powers of an authentic cultural bureaucracy, the old regime will seek to isolate the new by performing upon it the easy surgery of political falsification. Because the writers of the new grouping aspire to independence in politics as well as in art, they will be identified with fascism, sometimes, directly, sometimes through the convenient medium of "Troskyism." Every effort, in short, will be made to excommunicate the new generation, so that their writing and their politics may be regarded as making up a kind of diabolic totality; which would render unnecessary any sort of rational discussion of the merits of either ...

But PARTISAN REVIEW aspires to represent a new and dissident generation in American letters; it will not be dislodged from its independent position by any political campaign against it ... On the contrary, our pages will be open to any tendency which is relevant to literature in our time. Marxism in culture, we think, is first of all an instrument of analysis and evaluation; and if, in the last instance, it prevails over other disciplines, it does so through the medium of democratic controversy.⁵⁸

It is clear from this editorial statement that although PR wanted to illustrate its separateness from the Communist Party, it by no means wanted to declare the 'irrelevance of the social context to literature.' Literature, however, came to have a new social meaning for the 'active left-wing opposition to the Stalinists.'⁵⁹ The anti-Stalinists saw themselves as an important cultural vanguard, the bearers of all that

is new and, hence, most progressive in the arts. As Rahv said in a 1952 essay, the intelligentsia to which he had belonged

had the true pathos and conviction of a minority fighting under its own banner for its own ends; but that was back in the thirties and early forties. Its function then was to warn – and though the warning was not heeded the anti-Stalinists of that period played a vanguard role in that they were the first to discern the totalitarian essence of the Soviet myth. Since then, however, that minority political grouping has lost its bearings ...⁶⁰

In its essence PR believed now, like Trotsky, that what is newest in the field of art is most in touch with social contradictions in society at a particular time, and therefore is most revolutionary, and most able to warn. In no way, however, is its ability to warn served by prescriptions – like the demand for proletarian themes, or censorship laws. As Rahv says,

what the avant-garde actually represents historically, ... [is] the effort to preserve the integrity of art and the intellect amidst the conditions of alienation brought on by the major social forces of the modern era. The avant-garde has attempted to ward off the ravages of alienation in a number of ways: by means of developing a tradition of its own and cultivating its own group norms and standards, by resisting the bourgeois incentives to accommodation and perforce making a virtue of its separateness from the mass. That this strategy has in the main been successful is demonstrated by the only test that really counts – the test of creative achievement. After all, it is chiefly the avant-garde which must be given credit for the production of most of the literary masterpieces of the past hundred years, from *Madame Bovary* to the *Four Quartets*; and the other arts are equally indebted to its venturesome spirit.⁶¹

Trotsky's idea of Permanent Revolution was central to the new ideology of PR; it was important to the general political outlook of the editors, which was directed against Stalin, for socialist democracy and, in the late thirties, in favour of Trotsky; it was important culturally, aesthetically, because a permanent revolution in the arts meant that good art only had to be committed to the continual experimentation with form and content among the most advanced writers, from Farrell to T.S. Eliot; it was important because the idea of permanent revo-

60 Rahv, 180

61 Rahv, 182

58 (December 1937) 3-4

59 Wald, 6

lution is dependent on a notion of the internationalist character of the socialist revolution, and thus it gave Rahv and other editors political reason to call for the 'Europeanization' of the radical American literary movement (via Malraux, Picasso, Gide, and even Trotsky, but most importantly, via the Surrealists in Paris, and Rivera and Frida Kahlo in Mexico). This last point is especially important in terms of the concept of an intelligentsia, because it was the European intellectuals who developed the concept of an intelligentsia as a new, progressive movement, contrary to its roots in the nineteenth-century Russian aristocracy.⁶² The editors of *PR* now 'turned to the intellectual as the central figure of revolutionary art.' Rahv's April 10, 1938 letter to Trotsky talks about the role of *PR*'s intellectuals as 'translators' of 'political analysis' into 'cultural metaphors and psychological perceptions' (4212). In April 1938, Rahv publicly identified himself with the intellectuals who were on trial in Moscow and with the man he called, 'the scapegoat, the sin-bearer,' 'Pharmakos-Trotsky.'⁶³

As early as 7 July 1937, Dwight Macdonald was writing to Trotsky about 'a group of writers in New York City ... reviving the *Partisan Review*.' He requests that Trotsky contribute two articles, at \$50 apiece, for the new monthly, 'an independent Marxist journal.' In Trotsky's copy of the letter, Trotsky has underscored the detail that Macdonald is on 'the executive committee of the Committee For the Defense of Leon Trotsky.'⁶⁴ On the 15th of July, Trotsky replies to Macdonald's letter and agrees to collaborate with *PR*, a journal 'ideologically directed against poisons of both the 2nd and 3rd Internationals.' He begins to link up people, introduce them and their ideas to other partisans in different parts of the world: he mentions Diego Rivera because he, too, had thought to produce a revolutionary Marxist magazine devoted to cultural questions (Macdonald will pick up on this much later in their correspondence). Trotsky says that he understands how *PR* can be an 'independent Marxist journal' in the sense that it is not tied to any political organization, but he maintains that it must always de-

62 See Gilbert on European culture. He stresses the importance of Rahv's and Phillips' appreciation of André Malraux and Ignazio Silone, two important revolutionary writers who 'had made a revolutionary the hero of their novels, and by doing so they opened their works to the exploration of the clash of cultures and consciousness which any profound social upheaval would exhibit.

They had opened a literary discussion of the problems of western civilization to which Marxism was relevant (p. 170).

63 A letter published in *PR* (April 1938) 9.

64 Letter (2836)

pend on fundamental principles which, in the end, cannot be separated from a certain political orientation. The polemizing begins with the next exchange: Macdonald writes back to Trotsky on 23 August, five months before the appearance of the first issue of the renewed *PR*. It is clear that the editors of *PR* are somewhat confused about their orientation, and Trotsky makes good use of this later in their correspondence. A tension seems to be emerging between the goals of editing a cultural journal, and battling the socialist revolution on two political fronts — against Stalinism in Soviet Russia, and for a new Leninist party in America.

Macdonald knows full well that *PR* will be branded 'Trotskyist' by the 'local Stalinist literateurs.' He says that 'the *New Masses* [sic] gang is already describing us as stooges of the Fourth International.' But he says that the editors 'are by no means ashamed or frightened by the connections they establish between your [Trotsky's] ideas and our magazine.' Macdonald closes modestly: 'we are very eager to have you write for us on cultural and literary questions, knowing, of course, your approach to cultural problems fully involves your entire political position.'⁶⁵ And, there's the dilemma, on two counts: *PR* adopts the programme of Permanent Revolution to cultural questions inasmuch as it can, but experiences conflict between its commitment to avant-garde literature and art, and its political struggle against Stalinism and for liberation. In any case, Trotsky's ideas about revolutionary cultural developments and art are part and parcel of his wider political goals and practices: he wants to build one large, intellectual and cultural community.

For this reason Trotsky writes to his American representative, James Burnham, on 22 March 1938 (7458). Burnham was a writer and political organizer who had befriended many of the artists and writers associat-

65 The letter reads as follows:

Because of its connections and the character of its contributors, most of whom are more or less allied with your program, the *Partisan Review* will doubtless be branded as Trotskyist by the local Stalinist literateurs. In fact, even prior to the appearance of our first number, the *New Masses* gang is already describing us as stooges of the Fourth International. Although we think the description inaccurate, we are by no means ashamed or frightened by the connections they establish between your ideas and our magazine.

We are very eager to have you write for us on cultural and literary questions knowing, of course, your approach to cultural problems fully involves your entire political position. As you remember, we suggested several subjects in our first letter. In case you wish to write on the other subjects, do not hesitate to disregard our suggestions.

ed with *PR* and 'The League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism.'⁶⁶ Burnham replies to Trotsky on 12 April 1938, giving his opinions of the various editors of *PR* (407). He says that 'they divide more or less naturally into three groups.' Of the novelist and critic Mary McCarthy, an original editor who has just resigned, Burnham says:

She is a handsome, black-haired Irish girl, of some wit and shrewdness. She is apparently a kind of literary "career woman", who sees the anti-Stalinist left intellectualism as a good current racket. She was living with Philip Rahv when, suddenly, two months or so ago she married Edmund Wilson. The other board members were shocked and wounded by this incident. For her, the *Partisan Review* [sic] had proved a convenient stepping stone. This little episode is not, however, without a collateral significance in estimating the magazine. (407)

Burnham's assessment of the editors continues in a more systematic fashion. First he assesses George L.K. Morris; second, Dwight MacDonald; and, third, he lumps together F.W. Dupee, William Phillips and Philip Rahv. Burnham writes MacDonald when it should read MacDonald, but this is a common error in the letters:

1. George L.K. Morris is the brother of Newbold Morris, elected last Fall on the Republican-Fusion-A. L. P. ticket as President of the new City Council. He, I understand, supplies most of the money – he comes from one of the oldest families in New York (the Gouverneur Morris family of pre-Revolutionary days). His only serious interest is abstract art, which he collects with impeccable taste in his pent-house apartment, and paints with care and sensitivity though not great profundity ...

2. Dwight MacDonald is a most delightful and dynamic and rather hare-brained person. Until two years ago he was one of the editors of *Fortune*. He broke with *Fortune* in a thoroughly honorable manner: He was assigned to write the famous articles on the U.S. Steel Corporation. They published the first installment in a greatly censored form, but even then Wall Street howled. *Fortune* insisted on chopping up the remainder, and MacDonald parted ... He is not a consistent political thinker, and I don't think ever will be. It is hard to define his views, but they are something like what a young and energetic Charles

⁶⁶ The members of the League are listed in my dissertation, 'Cultural Politics in the 1930s: *Partisan Review*, the Surrealists and Leon Trotsky,' The University of Alberta, 1983. Short biographies appear in Appendix B, 249–69.

Beard's might be. He is strongly anti-Stalinist. He has been on the whole a loyal sympathizer of ours for some years ...

3. The remaining three – Dupee, Phillips, Rahv – were all members of the C.P., Phillips and Rahv for several years, Dupee for a little over a year. They are all literary rather than political, though they are becoming gradually more politicalized [sic]. The first [Moscow] Trial really broke Phillips and Rahv, but they were afraid to split and didn't know how or where they would be able to write (which was a primary concern). Dupee joined the C.P. impulsively, after a three year period in which he had nearly committed suicide while living first in the country and then in little Mexican towns, unable to do anything or get oriented. They [sic] have developed steadily in the past year and a half – then, for example, they were planning a magazine which would be so 'non-political' that the Stalinists would still support it (as is usual in such cases, they rationalize their own timidity into theories about the backwardness of the American scene, the necessity of leading others along toward the light ...). Rahv seems to have come farthest – both he and Dupee regard themselves as revolutionaries. All three, and MacDonald also, are ready to come along at once with the new defense organization [American Committee for Defense of Leon Trotsky]. (407)

The most representative of the exchanges between Trotsky and the editors of *PR* is a letter signed by Philip Rahv for the Editorial Board a few weeks before Trotsky and Burnham had consulted. A portion of (4211) is reproduced in Appendix A with Trotsky's markings intact. It is interesting to note that at the bottom of the first page Trotsky has handwritten: 'Ich gestehe' (I confess), the name of a novel by a German ex-prisoner of the G.P.U., Wolf Weiss. This letter is a response to Trotsky's letter of 20 January 1938 (8953), one of the few letters which was published in the Trotskyist publication *New International* (March–April 1950), and in *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art* (pp. 101–3). Trotsky is critical of the *PR* editors in his letter: he says they are capable people, 'but they have nothing to say.' He accuses them of wanting to 'create a small cultural monastery' when the world is on the verge of war. He is ready to grant them the independence they require to be an artistic publication, but insists that they must defend their independence 'with sword, or at least with whip, in hand.' Rahv then begins his reply to Trotsky's letter with a certain amount of tolerance. He says 'your letter raises questions which go to the heart of our editorial problems.' But he says that the magazine's 'uncertain line' is at least in part due to the 'uncertainty' of the cultural and political situation which the