

BOOK REVIEW

The First Five Years of the Communist International

Volume I

BY LEON TROTSKY

Reviewed by: E.S.P.

Trotsky vs. Stalin

“The Revolution Betrayed” is a reprint of a book long out of print. The first volume of “The First Five years of the Communist International” is the first English edition of speeches and writings which Trotsky composed between 1919 and 1921.

In “The Revolution Betrayed”—first published in 1937—Trotsky held his final reckoning with Stalin, with the Soviet bureaucracy, and with what he considered the absurd attempt to establish “Socialism in one country.” This is Trotsky’s most bitter book. It was written by one who knew he was defeated and wanted to take the last revenge open to him. The angry tone of the charges hurled against the men who, according to Trotsky, perverted Lenin’s program seriously weakens the criticism.

A very different man speaks from the pages of “The First Five Years of [the] Communist International.” The documents in this volume, dating from the first half of Trotsky’s most successful period, display the brilliance of intellect, the wide range of knowledge and the political vision which distinguished Lenin’s most dazzling collaborator. In those years Trotsky was the confident prophet of “world revolution,” enthusiastically acclaimed by millions.

Many ideas and observations in “The First Five Years” have obvious bearing on the policy pursued by Moscow today. Indeed, in rereading what Trotsky said between 1919 and 1921 and comparing it with some recent developments, one may wonder whether Moscow’s ban was not aimed at Trotsky’s difficult personality rather than his program.