The question of permanent revolution is a question about the general evaluation of the course of our revolution, a question about the relations between the basic classes of our society, about changes in the relations of the social forces in the course of revolution, and, consequently, about the conclusions we must draw from the corresponding theoretical analysis.

The present stage of our discussion, the form it is taking at the present time, and the scope of the questions which are now developing inside our party organisation, are different from the past formulation of the question: the basic difference in our present discussion consists of the individual problems which confronted us last year, and which in part still confront us today, all these individual problems come together in one basic question, the question about the understanding of our revolution in toto. And this goes to the practical essence of the theoretical disputes about permanent revolution.

The moment our country is experiencing now is a special moment. We are now at a turning point in history. This is not like those historical turning points which our revolution has already gone through. But this does not stop it being a definite historical turning point. The essence of any internal turning point in our country – but internal turning points are of course linked with the external situation – derives from changes in the relations between the basic classes of our society, the working class and the peasantry. This was so and will be so for

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1 This article is an edited stenogram of a report delivered on 13 December to a meeting of propagandists of the Moscow organisation [Bukharin's footnote]. [N. Bukharin, ‘Teoriia permanentnoi revoliutsii’, Pravda, no. 295, 28 December 1924, pp. 5–7. This was a report by Bukharin on 13 December 1924 to a meeting of the propagandists of the Moscow Party organisation. A little less than half of it (the two sections entitled ‘The General Estimation of our Revolution’ and ‘The General Estimate of Classes in the Progress of Our Revolution’) appeared in translation in Communist Review, vol. 5, no. 10, February 1925, and is available on www.marxists.org. I have adapted this translation to conform to the conventions I have used in the other pieces in this collection. I have provided a new translation of those parts of the Pravda original that were not originally translated].
a very long time to come. The turning point that is taking place here now is also rooted in changes in the relationship between the working class and the peasantry. We only brought this point up to show the following: if our country is at a famous turning point, and if this turning point demands that our party respond to the question of the new relationship between the working class and the peasantry, then it is completely natural that the ‘theory of the permanent revolution’, which ‘touches’ primarily on this question, must be linked with the practical tasks of the present day; and in this sense, the formulation in turn of the theoretical discussion of permanent revolution reflects the practical, day-to-day demand to look again and again at the fundamental relationship between the classes of our society, starting from the Leninist understanding of this relationship between the classes in a new, unique context, when these relations developed in a different way than they had developed earlier. This discussion reflects and expresses the need for the correct answer to be found, starting from the general principles of comrade Lenin’s teachings about the worker-peasant bloc to new questions of our ‘great politics’. This is why we have said and are still saying that our theoretical discussion has an immediate, current, practical significance. Let’s move now, after this shortish introduction, to the essence of our disagreements with comrade Trotsky.

The disagreements between comrade Trotsky and a majority of the party were significant not only in the pre-October period, but – as everyone is aware – also in the post-October period. And now all of these disagreements have been analysed in general, theoretical terms. The recent literary works by comrade Trotsky,2 and also the letter which was printed with comrade Ol’minskii’s comment,3 (we note in parentheses that we are completely ignoring any personal evaluations, any personal sympathies and antipathies, allegiances or dislikes, and are speaking only about the political line) have essentially shone a bright light on the individual and personal quarrels, disagreements, and clashes between a majority of our party and comrade Trotsky. Everyone could see from comrade Trotsky’s letter that, on the question of the basic motive forces of the Russian Revolution and – in the context of this general question – of the relations between the proletariat and the peasantry, there is a big difference between comrade Trotsky’s position and the position of our party as a whole. And this fact is common to all of the individual, personal errors of comrade Trotsky; it binds them in a kind of common knot, and this knot is bound up in turn in the theory of permanent revolution. We will try to illustrate this in the following presentation.

2 A reference probably to Trotsky, Document 1; Trotsky 1965a; Trotsky 1971.