

“Stalinism and Counter-revolution: Reflections on Trotsky’s Final Book”

By Paul Kellogg

A truncated (and controversial) version of Trotsky’s final work – a political biography of Stalin – was published in 1946. Last year, a new much longer edition was published. This paper will critically review the two versions of Trotsky’s final book and suggest that they are, in fact, more similar than different. In both, Trotsky sketches in outline two ideas which were a departure from his earlier works in the 1930s. First, that Stalin’s rise to power needs, in part, to be related to the specific dynamics of the party machine so carefully constructed by Lenin. Second, that to understand the class nature of the Soviet Union, you must not solely deploy the concept of state-ownership of the economy (the main criteria advanced in his well-known *Revolution Betrayed*), but must also and in fact primarily deploy a more orthodox, historical materialist concept – that of control of the surplus product.