

Rough Draft

PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION

Part III: Alternatives

Chapter I — LEON TROTSKY AS THEORETICIAN

"What I discover in my consciousness is thus exaggerated into a fact of the consciousness of all, and even passed off as the very nature of consciousness." — Hegel

"Dialectic is the theory of knowledge of (Hegel and) Marxism. This is the 'side' of the matter (it is not 'aside' but the essence of the matter to which Plekhanov paid no attention.)"

"Philosophical idealism is only nonsense from the standpoint of crude, simple, metaphysical materialism."
— Lenin

The Russian Revolution of 1917 marked as great a divide in theory as in world history. The crucial point, however, is not the self-evident one of opposition between those who were active in the revolution and those who opposed it. The axis here is the differences between the two men who led this revolution. Lenin and Trotsky prepared themselves very differently to meet historic destiny November 7, 1917. Both were Marxist revolutionaries. Both were by then in a single organization. It is true that Trotsky had not joined the Bolsheviks before the summer of 1917 while during the long, hard difficult years, from 1903 to 1917, when Bolshevik tendency was hammered out as an organization, Trotsky fought it bitterly, endlessly, recklessly, but from the eve of October till the death of Lenin, no difference between them impinged on the "Organizational Question." Here Trotsky was right when he said that the Revolution had "liquidated" the differences. Where he was wrong was to think that the similarity of political positions and the organizational fusion signified a oneness of methodology.

It was, of course, no accident that the Great Divide in Marxism caused by World War I and the collapse of established Marxism (the Second International) sent Lenin back to Hegelian dialectics not just "in general", and not just as interpreted by others, but in Hegel himself, as the philosophic point of origin and point of return of the Marxism of Marx while all the other Marxists (Trotsky included) who likewise had remained true to Marxist Internationalist principles felt no such compulsion. He felt it sufficient to carry on political polemic without ever coming to grips either with the underlying philosophy or the philosophic direction.

It would, of course, be ludicrous to draw from this the conclusion that had Trotsky only reread Hegel's Logic, he would have evolved the same methodology. Trotsky took dialectics for granted; it remained "inner", some-

where in the back of his head. The objective situation changed but this appeared to him only to have proved the correctness of his theory worked out for a different historic period. The break in Lenin's thought, on the other hand, disclosed a theoretician for whom not only political theory but even "pure" empiric facts were always seen within a conceptual structure that was forever changing, active, on the move, along with the objective and subjective developments themselves. In a word, the conceptual structure was as much a developing subject as the self-development of the human being.

The truth is always concrete and nowhere more so than on the question of methodology which becomes ground for the inner coherence between philosophy and politics. To this day, there has been no philosophic analysis of the different attitudes on the part of Lenin and Trotsky. Where we do not get Stalinist slanders, we get subjectivist attitudes. Because of the heroic mold of the former Commissar of War, the rigors of his exile after Lenin's death and Stalin's victory over Trotsky, the calumnies that dogged his every step until the day of his murder at the hands of a GPU assassin, the subjective air in much that has been written about Trotsky is attributed to Trotsky himself.* His views, however, were objectively grounded. It wasn't because he was "the man of October" as he was affectionately called by his adherents, that he erred in the analysis of the class nature of the Soviet Union and continued to call for its defense even after the Hitler-Stalin pact. Even as the assassin's pick ax pierced his skull, Trotsky maintained that Russia was a Workers' State, "though degenerate" and called for its defense. The reduction of the very concept of socialism to nationalized property stemmed, rather, from the methodology which failed to see a transformation into opposite in the state property form.

The dualism in Trotskyism was bounded, on the one hand, by the concepts of world revolution and, on the other hand, by workers' state = statified property. But this dualism was not the result of subjectivism. Rather it was due to the abstract form of the theories. "Abstract empiricists" is the epithet Marx threw at those — scientists, materialists, collectors of "lifeless facts" — who failed to grasp that the proletariat seeks universality. Theory,

* One personal experience can help illuminate the lack of subjectivity on Trotsky's part. At the height of the Moscow Frame-Up Trials against himself, the bourgeois press printed "rumors" that Stalin had at no time been a revolutionary but had always been a Czarist agent provocateur and was now merely wreaking revenge. "But Stalin was a revolutionary!" Trotsky explained. He insisted on adding a postscript to the articles of the day which exposed the Stalinist charges against him. Here was what he dictated: "The news has been widely spread through the press to the effect that Stalin supposedly was an agent-provocateur during Tsarist days, and that he is now avenging himself upon his old enemies. I place no trust whatsoever in this gossip. From his youth, Stalin was a revolutionist. All the facts about his life bear witness to this. To reconstruct his biography ex post facto means to ape the present Stalin, who, from a revolutionist, became the leader of the reactionary bureaucracy."

original Marxist theory, is so hard a taskmaster, and so inseparable from both reality and philosophy that, no matter how brilliant the prognostication -- and the 1905 prediction that the proletariat, before achieving power in any technologically advanced country, may come to power in backward Russia was surely such a brilliant prognostication -- can substitute for what Hegel called "the labor, patience, seriousness, and the suffering of the negative". Without this "labor, patience, seriousness and suffering of the negative", the theory of the permanent revolution could not become enriched from the actual objective and concrete developments.

Originally, the theory was known as "the theory of Parvus and Trotsky". In 1904, in a series of articles on the Russo-Japanese War entitled "War and Revolution", Parvus had written:

"The war has started over Manchuria and Korea; but it has already grown into a conflict over leadership in East Asia. At the next stage Russia's entire position in the world will be at stake; and the war will end in a shift in the political balance of the world ... And the Russian Proletariat may well play the role of the vanguard of the socialist revolution." (quoted by Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, page 104. See also the biography of Parvus, The Merchant of Revolution, by Z.A.B. Zeman and W. B. Scharlau.)

In My Life, Trotsky, who was Parvus' junior by 12 years, readily enough admitted that the analysis of Parvus "brought me closer to the problems of Social Revolution, and, for me, definitely transformed the conquest of power by the proletariat from an astronomical 'final' goal to the practical task of our day." Nevertheless, it was Trotsky's 1905, a series of articles written in 1904 through 1906, climaxed by the theses, Summaries and Prospectives, which came out of the actual 1905 revolution that raised the prognosis to the level of theory. It can rightly be considered original in this development.

We have, first, the theory as it was elaborated in 1906. It is this which Trotsky felt was proven historically to be true in 1917 as against Lenin's conception of "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." Trotsky claims that because Lenin changed that slogan in April, 1917, that this means that Lenin "came over to his position" and that, in any case, history had brought the two together and Lenin did the rest in "rearming" the Bolshevik party accordingly. Here it is not Lenin's rearming of the Party, but Trotsky's rearming of himself, which is the point at issue. The original 80-page thesis on the vanguard role of the proletariat, the subordinate role of the peasantry and the interrelationship of Russia with the European Revolution became the subject of controversy with Stalin who charged Trotsky with "underestimation of the peasantry." Let us read the main theses as Trotsky himself wrote them:

"In a country economically more backward the proletariat may come to power sooner than in a country capitalistically advanced ... Marxism is above all a method of analysis -- not an analysis of texts, but an analysis of social relations..."

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We have shown above that the objective premises of socialist revolution have already been created by the economic development of the advanced capitalist countries ...

Many elements of the working masses, especially among the rural population will be drawn into the revolution and for the first time obtain political organization only after the urban proletariat has taken the helm of government.

Without direct state support from the European proletariat the working class of Russia cannot remain in power and cannot convert its temporary rule into prolonged socialist dictatorship... On the other hand, there is no doubt that a socialist revolution in the West would allow us to turn the temporary supremacy of the working class directly into a Socialist dictatorship...

It is the purpose of every Socialist party to revolutionize the minds of the working class in the same way as development of capitalism has revolutionized social relations ... The colossal influence of the Russian revolution manifests itself in killing party routines, in destroying Socialist conservatism, in making a clean contest of proletarian forces against capitalist reaction a question of the day ... An Eastern revolution imbues the Western proletariat with revolutionary idealism and stimulates its desire to speak 'Russian' to its foes."

These are the main theses of the theory that became famous as the theory of the permanent revolution as they were expounded in 1905-06 and, except for the "organizational" part regarding "killing party routine" and the need to "revolutionize the minds of the working class", repeated over and over and over again for nearly 35 long years, that is to say throughout the rest of Trotsky's life. Theoretically, his whole life can be said to be a series of postscripts to these 1905-06 theses. It is not without significance, however, that from the very start of the struggle with Trotsky, the choice of theoretic weapon -- the theory of permanent revolution -- was Stalin's not Trotsky's, though the latter eagerly rose to the bait. But it was Trotsky himself, not Stalin, long before it became a matter of dispute with Stalin, who had singled out the question of the role of the peasantry in a revolution as crucial. It was this and not the denigrations of Stalin, that is the point at issue in any analysis of Trotsky as a theoretician.

Thus, in 1909, Trotsky wrote that "local cretinism is the historical curse of the peasant movement ... It was on the circumscribed political intelligence of the peasant who, while in his village plundered his landlord in order to seize his land, but then, decked out in a soldier's coat shot down the workers, that the first wave of the Russian Revolution (1905) broke." As late as 1930, he quoted this statement, not as something that had outlived itself with the revolutionary peasant participation in the 1917 Revolution, but as something that still held true. No matter what the historical period, no matter which country, no matter what the world situation, Trotsky held to his position that "no matter how revolutionary the role of the peasantry may be, it can nevertheless not be an independent role and even less a leading one." (The Permanent Revolution, 1930)

And he insisted that the peasantry played a revolutionary role in 1917 "for the last time in their history." (Russian Revolution, page 407)

Despite Trotsky's claim that, on the agrarian question, he was "the pupil" and Lenin was the "teacher"; despite the actual role of the peasantry in 1917, which he, himself, expressed as "they pushed the Bolsheviks toward power with their revolt"; despite the fact that China, which was the country at issue in 1925-27, whose history is one long series of peasant revolts, Trotsky reverts so totally to the 1905 position that he doesn't even grant the peasant a national, much less a socialist, consciousness: "Agrarian backwardness always goes hand in hand with the absence of road ... and the absence of national consciousness."

Mao's on-the-spot report of the revolutionary role of the peasantry -- the Hunan report -- does not exist for Trotsky. If we allow for the fact that he may not have known of its existence as he was increasingly isolated from the inner sanctum of the leadership, it still remains a fact as late as 1938, when Mao Tse-tung, very much center front of the historic stage, had reentered the national scene through a new alignment with Chiang Kai-shek to fight against the Japanese invasion. Mao Tse-tung's claims of having established "peasant Soviets" is good for nothing more than a laugh. Trotsky once again reiterates: "the peasantry, the largest numerically and the most atomized, backward and oppressed class, is capable of local uprisings and partisan warfare, but requires the leadership of a more advanced and centralized class in order for this struggle to be elevated to an all-national level." Trotsky's words speak louder than any of Stalin's allegations about "under-estimation of the peasantry." Moreover, 10 years after the Stalin-Trotsky controversy, Trotsky repeated, in introducing a new work on the Chinese Revolution, (Harold Isaacs' The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution) that "the conception of the permanent revolution was confirmed once more, this time not in the form of a victory, but of a catastrophe."

Trotsky would have us believe that his position on the peasantry flowed from his position of the vanguard role of the proletariat but, in truth, from the very start, this conception of the proletarian role was marred by the very same abstractions as that of the peasantry. It was always a question of the Marxist organization having "influence over the proletariat", "leading" them, before they can gain state power, after the gain state power, and before socialism became a "world system." In a word, the proletariat, too, he saw, not as a self-developing subject, but as a mass force needed to overthrow capitalism.

The real division between Trotsky and Lenin was the attitude to the masses, be they peasant or proletariat. Are they the makers of history or only to be ordered about? Are they the force that overthrows capitalism but must return back to the role of passive masses the day after revolution?

To Lenin, the revolutionary role of the peasantry was not something he left behind with the April (1917) thesis when he declared the slogan of "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" had outlived itself, that from then on struggle was to be for the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the contrary, the masses were Reason even after the proletariat won power. Lenin still insisted that until the revolution envelops the countryside and the poor peasants -- their land committees -- hold destiny in their hands, the socialist

revolution would not really have completed itself.

Lenin's methodology was always that of looking at the masses -- be they proletarian, peasant or oppressed nationality -- as self-developing subject. In the dark days of World War I, when the proletariat was slaughtering itself across national boundary lines, he saw this in the struggle of small nations for self-determination: "The Dialectics of history is such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli which help the real power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely, the socialist proletariat." (LXXX, p. 303)

In opposition to many a Bolshevnik co-leader, to Lenin the success of the Russian Revolution did not mean that self-determination was no longer applicable. Stalin's "rudeness" and "disloyalty" during Lenin's lifetime was to be seen precisely in his Great Russian chauvinist attitude to the national minorities, the Georgians especially. As Lenin lay dying, he entrusted the struggle against Stalin on the question of national minorities to the hands of Trotsky. But, as was characteristic of Trotsky throughout his life, he once again went in for "conciliationism". He failed to unfurl the banner of struggle against Stalin at the twelfth Congress of the Russian Party as he had promised Lenin he would do.

Previously, in 1920 he did vote for Lenin's Theses on the National and Colonial Question. But again, as on the whole question of dialectics, Trotsky merely "took it for granted" without ever developing the universals of socialism anew with the newly developing objective situation. The one and only time that Trotsky gave serious consideration to the fact that the Theses established a new point of departure in theory, and that that new point was not on the basis of the theory of permanent revolution, but on the basis of the Leninist position on the national question, was the time when he was forced to do so by the exigencies of a united caucus with Zinoviev against Stalin's fatal class-collaborationist policy in China. But even then, he was defending Zinoviev's Thesis, which had based itself directly on Lenin's position. (appendix to Trotsky's Problems of the Chinese Revolution.) The minute the united caucus broke up, Trotsky once again brought to the forefront his own theory of permanent revolution. This is not a mere question of whose thesis ^{was} the relevance of it to a new situation. Lenin had felt that a new point of theoretical departure had to be established because a new objective situation had arisen with the decapitation of the German revolution of 1919 and the subsequent isolation of the Russian Revolution. The need to look at Peking instead of Berlin arose also from the fact that a new revolt was taking place in the East. A new "Subject" had come out of life. The "Subject" -- self-determination of nations -- may have appeared old but it was within such a new world situation that it had an altogether different meaning.

"Can we recognize as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of development of national economy is inevitable for those backward nations which are now liberating themselves ..."

And he answered:

"We must reply to this question in the negative ... we must ... give theoretical grounds for the proposition that, with the aid of the

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proletariat of the most advanced countries, the backward countries may pass to the Soviet, and after passing through a definite stage of development, to Communism, without passing through the capitalist stage of development. (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. X, p. 243.)

It cannot be stressed too much that these precedent-shaking statements came from a man who had spent decades fighting the Narodniki (Populists) of his own country, people who had maintained that Russia could skip the capitalist stage of development.

Just as Nehru thought that through the Panchayat (village council) India can go directly to socialism, so the Narodniki thought Russia could do that through the mir. Lenin fought them bitterly and won the theoretical debate. History has certainly upheld his judgment.

Only something very fundamental and objective could have wrought such a complete change in Lenin's concepts. Two world-shaking events brought about this transformation. Firstly, the 1917 Russian Revolution had established a workers' state that could come to the aid of a land even more backward technologically than Russia, while, secondly, the colonial revolutions themselves illuminated the revolutionary role not only of the peasantry but also of national struggles in the imperialist epoch.

It was this knowledge of the present stage of the imperialistic development of capitalism and the specific stage of national revolutions that impelled Lenin, ever since the Irish rising of Easter Week, 1916, to stress that not all initiative at all times comes only from the working class. He did not change this position when the proletariat did achieve the greatest revolution in history — the October Revolution in Russia. That revolution only underlined the truth of history's dialectic: just as small nations fighting for independence could unleash the socialist revolution, so the working class of industrialized countries achieving the revolution could help the underdeveloped countries avoid capitalist industrialization.

This point of departure in theory — industrialization without capitalism — rested, of course, on the proposition that the working class of the advanced countries could and would come to the aid of their brothers in the underdeveloped countries. (Ibid, p. 242).

As we saw, this page of Comintern history was lost, not only by Stalin whose policy ruined the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, but by Trotsky who chose just this moment to revive his theory of permanent revolution.

As he restated it in 1930 in his The Permanent Revolution, Trotsky claimed that central to it was "the question of the character, the inner coherence and the method of the International Revolution in general" ... "theory of permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their (colonial countries) tasks, democratic and national emancipation, is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nations, above all, its peasant masses." He repeated this over and over and over again.

The bold claim was made that:

"The problem of the permanent revolution has long ago outgrown the episodic differences of opinion between Lenin and Trotsky which were completely exhausted by history. The struggle is between the basic ideas of Marx and Lenin on the one side and the eclecticism of the Centrists on the other."

But, in truth, the counter-position of theses is not that of Trotsky to Stalin, but of Trotsky to Lenin. Unconscious it no doubt was. The direct opponent to whom it was consciously directed was Stalin with his phantasmagoria of "socialism in one country" for Russia and "the bloc of four classes" for China. Consciousness or unconsciousness, however, cannot change either the objective movement or the content of the two opposite positions, Lenin's and Trotsky's.

Trotsky claimed that on the agrarian question he was a pupil and follower of Lenin. One must question what he learned and whither it led him when, in 1938, 33 years after the 1905 thesis, 21 years after the 1917 Russian Revolution and 11 years after the 1925-27 Chinese Revolution, he denied the peasantry even a sense of national consciousness, much less any socialist consciousness.

In the last theoretic writing we have from his pen, in 1940, at a time when the world had been changed by Depression, the rise of Fascism, the sprouting of State Plans not only in the workers' state but throughout the private capitalist world, the national resistance of China to Japan's invasion and the active outbreak of World War II, Trotsky tiresomely repeats, "I repeatedly returned to the development and the grounding of the theory of the permanent revolution ... the peasantry is utterly incapable of an independent political role." (page 425)

To the extent to which Trotsky ever referred to Lenin's Theses on the National and Colonial question, what Trotsky stressed were the old points, not the new. Thus, the idea that it is possible for a technologically backward country to bypass capitalism if collaboration were established with a technologically advanced land led Trotsky merely to stress the dependence of the backward country on the advanced one without showing the new in the concept, that "the dialectic of revolution" made it possible for the small nation to win its freedom on its own. At the same time, the fact that the proletariat retained the leadership relative to the peasantry was made the occasion to reiterate his own conception of the impossibility of the peasantry playing any independent role, although the very reason for having new theses on an old subject was the fact that the world situation made it possible for these human forces to play different roles than heretofore. Instead, Trotsky referred to the new in the world situation only in order to stress that the national features were but the shadow of a world situation, not to demonstrate that the world revolution may be achieved through Peking, if not through Berlin.

This was no simple matter of quotations. Trotsky did not misquote Lenin. It was the way he read Lenin. It was the way he understood the objective world development. The new escaped him in Lenin's Theses because the new escaped him in the objective world development. It is as if the three revolutions -- 1905, 1917, 1925-27 -- were separated from each other, neither by time nor geography, nor by world economic development. Something so fantastically un-Marxist,

non-objective could happen to a Marxist trained in objectivity for one reason, and one reason only: the failure to have any concept of the philosophic subject — the masses as Subject, i.e., as shapers of history, which theoretically shows itself in the very idea of theory.

As is well-known but little understood, Karl Marx had broken with the bourgeois conception of theory which, at its highest point of development in Hegel, had evolved out of the dialectic of thought and thus became an argumentation among intellectuals. Hegel had come closest to the truth, to a philosophy of history, because his was an encyclopaedic mind, grounded in history, profound in its conceptions, tracing painstakingly the dialectic of ideas in different historic periods some 2500 years of human development. The genius of Marx consisted in tracing the development, the dialectic, the movement of Man, of great masses of laboring man, as profoundly as Hegel had traced the development of thought. Historical materialism wasn't a mere counterposition of matter to thought, but of labor, the human beings, who labor, think, struggle with those who have separated them from the means of labor.

Because Hegel had limited himself to the dialectic of thought, he could sum up where that reached as "The Absolute". Marx took the ground away from under this "Absolute" not only by having discovered the material foundation of society, and not only because living men would continue to change, but above all, because ^{was seen} man as Subject, as history changing before our very eyes. History wasn't only the past, it was alive, it was present, and inherent in its actions were elements of the future development. But, since it was impossible to tell, at the beginning, what a development would be at the end, the theoretician must himself become a molder of history, participant in the transformation of reality. This was no one-way road. Theory and practice—not only as with Hegel, the idea of theory and the idea of practice — must unite and in that way, and in that way alone, does the old get uprooted, the new established.

Theoretically, this is achieved by transforming historic narrative into historic raison d'etre, not, however, by a priori thinking, but by learning from the elemental upsurge of the masses as it is in actuality. Thus, though the germ of that idea of capital was already present in the young Marx's writings and presented in sweeping terms in the Communist Manifesto in 1847; though Marx had labored on Capital two more decades; though he restructured the whole work in 1866 as a result of the impact of the Civil War in the United States and the struggle for the shortening of the working day that followed it, Capital did not become a finished book upon its publication in 1867.

On the contrary. The Paris Commune once again changed everything. Marx first sat down to write his historic masterpiece, The Civil War in France, in the very heat of the revolution. The new political conclusions he drew were certainly of sweeping and historic importance — the fact that the workers couldn't "take over", but must smash the state machinery was a discovery of the workers themselves, who, in the Commune, had discovered the "political form to work out economic emancipation." Above all, this new form of workers' rule disclosed the fact that even cooperative production could become "a sham and snare" unless it was controlled by "freely associated labor." To a theoretician, these political conclusions would be a nought if they couldn't simultaneously illuminate "pure" theory. So Marx returned to Capital once more and there showed how these actions of the

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workers had illuminated the most abstract concepts. As we saw in the chapter on Marx's Capital, the "fetishism of commodities", that golden cow of "free exchange", Marx was no longer satisfied to expose as to the actuality of exploitative class relations. After the Paris Commune, Marx expanded that section to stress that the very form of existence of value had to be shattered for this form was itself the truth of the reified existence of man.

The deeper philosophic concepts, in turn, affect the whole political struggle. Thus the break in Lenin's thought as he rediscovered both Hegel's self-developing subject and Marx's concept of "going lower and deeper into masses" meant a change, a total change in all his former political concepts. For Trotsky to think that it was a mere change in slogans -- from dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry to dictatorship of proletariat, not to mention any "coming over" to the concept of permanent revolution, was only the proof of how he himself was stuck in the old categories which had not become enriched by all that was happening as the masses were reshaping the course of history. Out of the actual, Lenin now discerned a new universal -- "to a man". The population to a man would reconstruct society.

Just as Marxism developed in opposition to state socialism (represented in Marx's day by Lassalle), so Marxism in Lenin's day developed in opposition to the administrative state-plan.

Lenin went so far as to say that the very principle of smashing the old state machine, the thing which marked the proletarian revolution, did not distinguish it: "The petty bourgeoisie in a frenzy may also want as much." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. VII, p. 337.)

What did distinguish the socialist revolution was the way it was accomplished -- from below: "We recognize only one road, changes from below, we wanted workers themselves to draw up, from below, the new principles of economic conditions." (Ibid, p. 277).

The smashing up of the old state machine, done between October, 1917, and February, 1918, was the easiest part of the job. The difficult, the decisive task, followed. The population, he continued, must "to a man" run the state and manage the economy and for that:

"It is necessary to abolish the distinction between town and country as well as the distinction between manual workers and brain workers." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol IX, p. 433)

The proof that that was the goal of genuine communism lay in the fact that the formulae of genuine communism differed from the pompous involved phrasemongering of Kautsky, the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries and their beloved 'brethren' of Berne, in that they reduced everything to the conditions of labor. (Ibid. p. 439)

If then, the Communist Party did not become bureaucratized and did not begin to think that it can do for the masses what only the masses can do for themselves, then and only then could people move to socialism.

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"Every citizen to a man must act as the judge and participate in the government of the country, and what is most important to us is to enlist all the toilers to a man in the government of the state. That is a tremendously difficult task, but socialism cannot be introduced by a minority, a party." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. VIII, p. 320)

This was not said merely for outside consumption. It was said to a Party Congress. Nor was it said by a man on the way to power. It was said by a man in power in order to stress that the party should not, in the revision of its programme, forget how and why it came to power. He said it to stress that a party in power is still but a minority of the class, whereas socialism "can be introduced by tens of millions of people when they have learnt how to do every-thing for themselves." It was exactly this kind of perspective that impelled Lenin, two years afterwards, when the colonial revolutions burst upon the historic scene, to make these a new point of departure in his theory.

No such new points of departure existed for Trotsky. So long as no new stage of economic development had arisen to suck in any of the many centrifugal tendencies within the Bolshevik party, these latter could appear to differ merely politically. By 1928, however, it was no longer a question of factional fights or even only of the receding revolutionary wave, both West and East; it was internal. The NEP man had grown rich and did threaten the regime. The hurry with which Stalin then adopted the state plan of industrialization was not, however, due only to conditions in Russia, much less to any conviction that Trotsky had been right all along in proposing total state planning. By the end of the first five-year plan, in 1932, it had become quite clear that the whole world of competitive capitalism had collapsed. The depression had so undermined the foundations of "private enterprise", thrown out so many millions into unemployment, and threatened the very existence of capitalism, that capitalism as it had existed up to then — anarchic, competitive, exploitative, and a failure — had to give way to state planning to save itself from proletarian revolution. Whether it was in rich countries like the United States that could still, with its New Deal, maintain a mixed economy or it was Nazi Germany with its state plan and militarist Japan with its co-prosperity sphere planning, the whole world had definitely moved from the monopoly stage to state capitalism.

This challenge to Marxists to restate Marxism for its own epoch was met differently than the challenge had been met at the appearance of monopoly capitalism. As we know, Lenin had met the challenge of the new objective situation at the time it caused the First World War and the collapse of the Second International. He did not limit himself to tracing the transformation of competitive capitalism into its opposite, monopoly capitalism, but in this conceptual framework extended the analysis also to the labor movement and the transformation into opposite of a section of the proletariat into "the aristocracy of labor". Once he found the economic basis for the collapse of the Second International, he never once looked back.* Trotsky, on the other hand, confronted with a new stage of world capitalism and the new phenomena of Stalinism, looked for no objective roots of this new phenomena.

To him, the "property forms" (all limited by now to statification, for the early production conferences had gone, and soon the trade unions themselves were incorporated in the state) — were what made Stalinist Russia inviolate as

"a workers' state though degenerate", and the features of the bureaucracy purely limited to a "policeman" arrogating to himself a greater share of wealth as a result of his "distributive function." He continued to consider Russia a workers' state, no matter how the workers fared in this state, no matter whether the leadership was a bureaucracy with "Cain Stalin" — his phrase — at its head or not; whether foreign policy envisaged a Hitler pact, or otherwise; and even if the Moscow Frameup Trials killed off the "general Staff of the Revolution." As he lay dying, the heritage he left his cadre — the Fourth International — was still "Defense of the Soviet Union."

What methodology of thought led to such a conclusion? Here are his own words, from The Revolution Betrayed. (pages 247-48):

"The first concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state to occur in history was achieved by the proletariat with the method of social revolution, and not by capitalists with the method of trustification."

Where Lenin had fought hard against transforming the reality of the early workers' state into an abstraction which hid the bureaucratic deformations even then, Trotsky spent all the rest of his life transforming the Stalinist state into an abstraction which blinded him to the actual transformation into opposite. Where Lenin warned that a workers' state was a transitional state and could be transitional "either to socialism or a return backwards to capitalism", Trotsky limited any warning about a possible restoration of capitalism "on the installment plan" to the restoration of private capitalism. Neither the fact that the workers had lost all their control over production through factory conferences, nor the fact that the trade unions themselves had been incorporated into the state apparatus nor the fact that the means of production were increasing at the expense of the means of consumption exactly as under private capitalism would move him from making statified property into a fetish, nationalized property = workers' state.

Like all fetishisms the fetishism of state property blinded Trotsky from following the course of the counter-revolution in the relations of production. The legitimization of the counter-revolution against October, the Stalinist Constitution, Trotsky viewed merely as something that first "creates the political premise for the birth of a new possessing class." As if classes were born from political premises! The macabre Kremlin purges only proved to Trotsky that "Soviet society organically tends toward the ejection of the bureaucracy!" Because to him Stalinist Russia was still a workers' state, he thought that the Moscow Trials weakened Stalinism. Actually, they consolidated its rule.

Trotsky would speak of the possibility of a restoration of capitalist relations, but it was always something that might happen or would happen, but not as a process evolving "before our very eyes" * evolving in the startling,

*Rakovsky, next to Trotsky the most important leader in the Left opposition, had phrased it when the first wave of leaders of the Left opposition had capitulated to Stalin just as soon as he did adopt this five-year plan: "The capitulators refuse to consider what steps must be adopted in order that industrialization and collectivization do not bring about results opposite to those expected ... They leave out of consideration the main question: what changes will the Five-Year Plan bring about in the class relations in the country." (Russian Opposition Bulletin #7, 11/29.)

but not altogether unforeseen form of state capitalism.* The movement from monopoly to state capitalism was, moreover, a world phenomenon. Trotsky denied the fact. He rejected the theory.

The struggle against Stalinism had the air of self-defense, however, not because Trotsky was subjective about his own status of leader of the Russian Revolution, but because objectively he saw nothing fundamentally new in World capitalist development; it had simply become more decadent and in its "death agony" had emitted fascism without changing the economic relations in Russia. Nothing for him had changed since the decade of 1914-1924 -- except the leadership. Stalin was the "organizer of defeats" -- and he, Trotsky, could organize victories.

This is not meant sarcastically. He certainly was a leader of the only victorious proletarian revolution in history. Whether as Chairman of the Military Revolutionary Committee, which had planned the actual insurrection, builder of a Red Army, out of raw peasant recruits, that withstood all counter-revolutionary attacks from Tsarist generals and other professionals, Commissar of War, or Foreign Minister, history will not deny him his victories.

But this is not the mark of a Marxist theoretician. As theoretician, three principles should have governed his analysis of Stalinism: (1) the new stage of economic development, no matter what that was called; (2) in strict relationship to the subjective development, the new form of workers' revolt and the new strata in the population that would continue to oppose the new stage of production; and (3) the new relationship between theory and practice which flowed from the new objective and subjective factors.

Because none of these factors determined Trotsky's analysis, his criticism, though constant, of Stalinism, related itself to bureaucratism and the adventurist "tempo" of Stalinist industrialization. Thereby he became an actual prisoner of the Stalinist Plan. No wonder that, in the process, the very concept of socialism was reduced to the concept of state plan. Trotsky's denials not-

* As far back as 1872, Marx had predicted that the logical development of the law of the concentration and centralization of capital would lead to state capitalism. Engels repeats this in Anti-Duhring, a work read and approved by Marx; & after Marx's death, in his criticism of the Erfurt Program stressing this time that thereby "capitalism could not be regarded any longer as being planless." In 1907 Kautsky puts the question of statification directly into the Erfurt Program. By World War I this is considered to be not just theory, but fact. It is included not only in the popular ABC of Communism by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, the text used in all Soviet schools, but it also appears in the first Manifesto of the Communist International -- written by Leon Trotsky: "The state control of social life against which capitalist liberalism so strived, is become a reality. There is no turning back either to free competition or to the domination of trusts, syndicates, and other kinds of social anomalies. The question consists solely in this: who shall control state production in the future -- the imperialist state or the state of the victorious proletariat?"

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withstanding, the proof of this is in Trotsky's own words — in nothing less fundamental than the Manifesto of the Fourth International on "Imperialist War and Proletarian Revolution!"

"To turn one's back on the nationalization of the means of production on the ground that, in and of itself, it does not create the well-being of the masses, is tantamount to sentencing the granite foundation to destruction on the ground that it is impossible to live without walls and a roof."

The "Man of October" couldn't have fallen any deeper into the mire of the ideas and methodology of the Russian bureaucracy which, instead of theory was presenting an administrative formula for minimum costs and maximum production — the true gods of all class rulers. Because Trotsky saw no fundamental class division involved in the struggle against Stalinism, the struggle of necessity was reduced to the question of a struggle for leadership. Since Trotsky's analysis of the nature of Stalinism lacked a class character, Stalin's "theory of socialism in one country" was treated by him as a new form of reformism, to be fought as such:

"Theory of Stalin-Bukharin tears also the national revolution from international path. The present policy of the Communist International, its regime and the selection of its leading personnel, correspond entirely to the debasement of the Communist International to an auxiliary corps which is not destined to solve independent tasks." (page 157 — emphasis added).

In fact, it was Trotsky who tore Stalinist Russia out of the new stage of world economy. Failing to recognize a new stage of world economy and failing to see the class transformation within Russia, he naturally did not see the Stalinists as aspirants for world power. The Hitler-Stalin pact did nothing to change Trotsky's concept that the Communist Parties in World War II would do what the Social Democrats had done in World War I, each party capitulating to its own national bourgeoisie. Then the Fourth International would expose the betrayers and win, to its side, the proletariat which remained "immature". This after the Spanish Revolution. No wonder the Fourth International was a still-birth.

Trotsky recognized this much: the responsibility to establish — or the failure to establish — the link of historic continuity from Marx to Lenin was now his alone. Here is how he expressed it in his Diary, 1935:

"After his (Rakovsky's) capitulation, there is nobody left ... and still I think that the work in which I am engaged now, despite its insufficient and fragmentary nature, is the most important work in my life. More important than that of 1917. More important than the period of the Civil War, or any other.

"For the sake of clarity I would put it this way: Had I not been present in 1917 in St. Petersburg, the October Revolution would have taken place on the condition that Lenin was present and in command. The same can, by and large, be said of the civil war period... Thus I cannot speak of the indispensability of my work even about the period from 1917-21.

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"But now my work is indispensable in the full sense of the word. There is no arrogance in this claim at all. The collapse of the two Internationals has posed a problem which none of the leaders of these Internationals is at all equipped to solve. The vicissitudes of my fate has armed me with important experience in dealing with it. There is now no one except the 2nd and 3rd Internationals. I need at least five years of uninterrupted work to insure the succession."

If only Trotsky had developed a theory that measured up to the challenge of the times, if even the cadre didn't!

His weakness was always the question of leadership. And now he not only raised this to the level of theory but attributed it to Lenin: "For Lenin's slogans to find their way to the masses there had to exist cadres ... the vital mainspring in this process is the party, just as the vital mainspring in the mechanism of the party is its leadership." This was exactly what the vital mainspring of Lenin's philosophy was NCT. Despite vanguardism, in 1917 he threatened "to go to the sailors"; in 1920 to the non-party masses; in 1923 against Political Committees.

Despite Trotsky's claim that on the question of the role of the Party, he had come over to Lenin, it is clear that he came over to Leninist 1903 concept of the Vanguard Party which held that the workers of themselves could not come to socialism, that it had to be brought to them from the outside by professional revolutionaries, and not to the 1917 conception of preferring "to go to the sailors" who were 100 times more revolutionary than the leadership of the Bolshevik party. Two decades afterward, Trotsky still speaks of the "immaturity" of the proletariat: "The strategic task of the next period -- a pre-revolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization -- consists in overcoming contradictions between the maturity of objective revolutionary conditions and immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard..."

Under the circumstances, his "appeals to the world proletariat" sounded hollow, remained abstractions. Without a basis in a self-developing, creative Subject, the Fourth International could not but be a stillbirth. All the world's problems had been reduced to a question of leadership, as the very first sentence of the Fourth International testifies: "The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat."

Marxists are fond of saying that abstractions help only the enemy. The abstraction, nationalized property = workers' state has most certainly helped the enemy, the Stalinist counter-revolution once it obtained the objective basis for being -- Russia's statified, exploitative economy. The theory disoriented a whole generation of Marxists.

The duality between the concept of world revolution and that of defense of Stalinist Russia, between socialism as a classless society that can only realize itself as a world society and socialism-nationalized property isolated from the world economy, between workers as the vanguard and workers that needed to submit to the militarization of labor, between Party as leader of the proletarian revolution and Party as ruling over workers' own instincts and demands, between peasantry

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as revolutionary ally of the socialist proletariat and peasantry so backward as to lack even a sense of national consciousness -- all these policies poured into a single mold called the theory of the permanent revolution which hardly changed from the time it was first conceived in 1905 through 35 long years of the most cataclysmic developments humanity has ever been subjected to, worked its way out of and is still shaping, is just too contradictory a burden for any cadre to bear.

A theory thus far removed from the realities of the age of imperialism and state capitalism had to collapse of its own hollowness. That present-day Trotskyist epigones can swear both by Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and Mao's "Communes" only shows that weightless abstractions and an administrative mentality would rather hold on to a state-power than to entrust everything to the elemental mass revolt.

Dialectics takes its own toll of theory and theoreticians.

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Detroit, Michigan

-- EAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA