

<https://www.enhedogkamp.dk/den-trotskyiske-verdensbevaegelse-2/>

*This article was written in 1995 by Klaus Riis, at that time head of the Workers' Communist Party of Denmark (APK)*

## "The Trotskyist World Movement"

For many reasons, it may be appropriate to look at what Trotskyism and the Trotskyist world movement stand for as a political and ideological current. Often it is seen as something insignificant or simply as a left-wing tendency among many others, with a number of factions that clash with each other and have helped to give the "Trotskyist movement" a slightly ridiculous tinge.

This is a misjudgment.

Trotskyism is an international political and ideological current that has a history of almost a hundred years. It presents its own policies and program of socialism and "world revolution", and claims to be the true proponent of Marxism and revolution, especially against "Stalinist" (by which they mean Marxist-Leninist) distortion and manipulation.

International Trotskyism is not a mass movement and has never managed to gain any solid foundation in the working class. Nevertheless, there are Trotskyist groups that spread their ideas and theories in most countries and in all parts of the world. Trotskyism has undergone many changes and modifications in its historical development to the present day, but it has nevertheless retained its basic features and its own special identity through all the different phases.

After the final fall of socialism in Europe in 1989-91, Trotskyism as an international current has had some progress. The Trotskyist organizations – which are far from all affiliated with Mandel's Fourth International\* – make up a significant part of the so-called left organizations in Western European countries. In addition, they have influence in the socialist, not the least the left socialist parties in a number of countries. There are new Trotskyist organizations in eastern European countries and the former Soviet Union, and there are also similar Trotskyist organizations in a large number of countries in Asia, Africa, North and South America. For a variety of reasons, however, Trotskyism has gained its greatest influence in the imperialist countries of Europe, and in the United States and Canada.

### **The origins of Trotskyism**

Trotsky formulated his basic ideas in the first 20 years of this century (1900s, Ed. note). All the current Trotskyist organizations defend these ideas, for example, the so-called "theory of the permanent revolution", the impossibility of "socialism in one country", etc.

Trotskyism developed in Russia within the Russian Social Democratic Party with a special ideological and political platform, at the same time and in parallel with the development of social democratic right-wing opportunism, revisionism and reformism in the European social democratic parties before and

---

\* Ernest Mandel (1923–1995) was a Belgian economist and theorist and for decades the leading member of the Trotskyist Fourth International. Ed. note

during the First World War, linked to names such as Bernstein and, not the least, Kautsky. In 1915, Lenin called Trotsky "one of the most dangerous of Kautsky's supporters".

Trotsky adopted a number of the opportunist social democratic ideas, not the least from the Germans Kautsky and Parvus, and embellished them with assurances of allegiance to Marxism and catchy slogans such as "permanent revolution."

In the struggles between opportunism and Leninism in the Russian Social Democratic Party, when the party split into the Social Democratic Mensheviks and Lenin's Bolsheviks, Trotsky was one of Lenin's political and theoretical opponents throughout the period 1903-17. He was described as a "centrist", a reconciler between the Social Democrats and the Communists. This was a position that Lenin saw as extremely damaging to the development of the Communist Party and to the possibilities of the revolution.

Just before the October Revolution, Trotsky left the Mensheviks. He defected "to the left" and became a member of Lenin's party. He was aware of the direction of the development and wanted to be part of the historic journey.

The fact that Trotskyism developed in Russia and for a short period "coexisted" with Marxism-Leninism in the Bolshevik Party had an enormous impact on the development of Trotskyism, its fate and role. By virtue of this, Trotskyism became especially suitable for operating and maneuvering both in relation to social democracy and communism.

### **Defected revolutionary hero**

It is well known that Trotsky, by virtue of his considerable personal skill, became one of the leading figures in the Russian Revolution and the Civil War. During this period, Trotsky did not dare to openly attack Lenin and Leninism, who had enormous authority within the Bolshevik Party and the international communist movement that organized the Third International, the Comintern.

Trotsky's ideological and political platform – fully developed Trotskyism – was completely rejected by the Bolshevik Party in 1927. Of its nearly 750,000 members, the Trotskyist platform (which denied that it was possible to build socialism in the Soviet Union alone) received the support of less than one percent. But Trotsky (and the rest of the opposition in the Bolshevik Party) also had supporters in a number of communist parties in the capitalist countries. In the late 1920s and early 30s, there was a struggle in a number of parties between the line of supporters of Lenin and Stalin, on the one hand, and the line of Trotsky and the opposition, on the other. The battle ended in defeat for the Trotskyists and the opposition. Many of them went over to the social democratic parties.

From 1923 Trotsky began to talk about the "degeneration" of the party and Soviet power. Later, he began to describe the Soviet Union as a society that was neither capitalist nor socialist, but a degenerate workers' state, ruled by a bureaucracy that held power and used it for everything evil. When Trotsky went into exile, he was welcomed with open arms in the imperialist world, including by the Social Democrats, who saw Trotsky's defection as confirmation of their own criticism of the revolution. Then followed the period of Trotsky's struggle against Stalin and the socialist Soviet Union from abroad, and the secret subversion by the Trotskyists inside the country, in the party and in the state.

Trotskyism came into vogue. It became international. It came as life-giving water to the western media's propaganda mill, which had used the white counterrevolutionaries' outright lies about the communists. Trotsky's weapons against the Soviet Union, Stalin and the Communists had the advantage that they did

not come from an overtly bourgeois group – which had an obvious interest in capitalism and possibly the restoration of tsarism – but from the mouth of a revolutionary hero. And his attack came from the "left".

It was at that time that it became common in the US and Western press, owned by multimillionaires, to attack Stalin and the CPSU for having "betrayed" the revolution, for not being revolutionary, socialist and communist enough.

In Trotsky's articles and books, anti-communist intellectuals and bourgeois propagandists found new formulations and angles for their attacks on the construction of socialism, and they were more effective than traditional anti-communist propaganda.

### **Trotskyism as an international current**

Trotsky was not content to be a renegade revolutionary hero who earned large sums of money by allowing himself to be used by the imperialist media. He became the central figure in the attempts to build an international political movement with Trotskyism as an ideological basis, the Trotskyist world movement.

First he organized his colleagues in the "International Left Opposition", and in 1938 founded the Fourth International, for which he formulated the theoretical basis of the so-called "Transitional Program". This is still the basic material for the organization and its national sections, e.g. the SAP [Socialist Workers Party] in Denmark.

Trotskyism, however, had great difficulty in finding a "political space" as an independent current. In the 1920s and 30s right up to the 60s, two major organized currents existed in the labor movement: the mass social democratic parties on a reformist basis and the communist parties. Although Trotskyists relied heavily on gaining a foothold in the Communist Parties, they were expelled not only from the CPSU, but from the entire international communist movement. The social democratic parties that supported Trotsky as a "defector" and anti-Bolshevik did not need his talk of world revolution and his other left-wing phrases.

In this situation, the Trotskyists developed the so-called tactic of "entryism" – a tactic that consists of infiltrating the social democratic and communist parties and other organizations and gradually finding Trotskyist supporters.

However, this tactic was not particularly successful. Nowhere did it lead to the mass support of social democratic and communist workers, as they had hoped. The Trotskyist world movement entered into a protracted crisis, which intensified during and after the war due to the fall of Hitler and the emergence of the socialist camp.

The movement broke into small groups fighting among themselves. However, the tactics of entryism helped to ensure its survival. But it wasn't until the 1960s – after the CPSU's 20th Congress, the "de-Stalinization" and the split in the international communist movement – that the international Trotskyist movement began to see light at the end of the tunnel. A broader political field was now created for the Trotskyists in connection with the growing crisis of social democracy and the advance of modern revisionism in the international communist movement.

The Trotskyists had some influence in the student revolt of 1968 and played their own role in the development of the anti-communist "New Left" in those years, not the least on the ideological level. Many of the ideas and analyses of Trotskyism became part of the legacy of this "New Left".

During this period, the tactics of entryism were abandoned by most Trotskyist organizations, but not by all. At the Fourth International's 10th World Congress in 1974, they passed a resolution on the building of "revolutionary-Marxist" parties in Europe, parties which supposedly would be "capable of leading the proletariat towards the victory of the socialist revolution", as they stated. This also assumed that the Fourth International was strengthened as the leading center of the "world revolution".

Today, the Trotskyist world movement feels strong enough to make a global push against the revolutionary movement, to replace Marxism and Leninism with Trotskyism as its ideological foundation, as the basic theory and program of contemporary revolutionary movements.

Therefore, there is every reason to take Trotskyism seriously as an international current. After more than half a century of directing its main attacks on the Soviet Union, the socialist countries and the communist parties, Trotskyism is now actively working to deal a decisive blow to communism and eradicate the theory and practice of the socialist revolution, Marxism-Leninism, which the ruling imperialist bourgeoisie still fears.

When we talk about the Trotskyist world movement, we must be aware that it is not an organizational or politically coherent entity. This is primarily due to the Trotskyist ideology and platform itself, which is the basis for countless divisions.

Ernest Mandel's Fourth International headquartered in Brussels, for example, is not the only one calling itself that. At a certain point in the 1970s, there were as many as six centers that called themselves the Fourth International.

Again and again, new Trotskyist organizations and groups emerge in different countries, and it always ends with infighting and competition between them over strategy, tactics and politics.

Nevertheless, they spring from a common ideology and share the same basic principles and attitudes. They have the same basic features that characterize all Trotskyist organizations, and their efforts are pulling in the same direction. All this makes it perfectly justified to sum up the fighting organizations and groupings as one political current, Trotskyism, or the Trotskyist world movement.

### **Permanent hopelessness**

A main component of Trotskyism is the theory of the permanent revolution, which appears as the very key to the solution of the problems of world revolution. In reality, it should be called the theory of permanent hopelessness, because it concretely denies the possibility of the victory of the revolution and the construction of socialism in a particular country.

In short, the starting point of the theory of the permanent revolution is the particular Trotskyist analysis of imperialism. This analysis argues that with the outbreak of the First World War, the death knell rang for all national programs: the time for the world revolution has come and it must be understood as a worldwide process, a global explosion, or rather chain of explosions, in which capitalism is replaced by socialism on a world scale.

According to this theory, imperialism has transcended all national borders and has become a whole that cannot be broken down step by step. This is justified by capitalism's objective tendency towards the globalization of the world economy and the domination of monopolies over all key capitalist positions.

A simultaneous global showdown with capitalism is therefore the necessary form that the transition from capitalism to socialism must take. The task of the revolutionaries is to await and prepare for this situation, having created in advance a revolutionary organization on a world basis to lead the revolution, a "General Staff of the World Revolution". It is this role that the Fourth International has awarded itself.

Consequently, no concrete revolution can prevail, and socialism cannot be built in a single country or group of countries. A revolution in a single country, such as the October Revolution in Russia, can at most be the spark that ignites the world revolution.

The construction of a socialist society over a long period of time in a country or group of countries is therefore, by definition, impossible.

Trotsky described the world revolution as this all-encompassing global explosion, and the Trotskyists have repeatedly proclaimed that the world revolution is "just around the corner", "only a few years" away. Of course, it has not appeared, but Trotskyism acts the same way as the religious prophets of doom who set a date for the end of the world. Every time it turns out that it does not succeed, there will always be a new opportunity sometime in the future.

On the basis of this deeply unscientific and anti-Marxist theory of revolution, Trotskyism must necessarily reject and criticize concrete revolutions and attempts to build socialism that are actually taking place and that the working class and its allies have carried out in a number of countries in this [19th] century. None of them has been the spark that could trigger the chain of explosion of the world revolution.

It is therefore inherent in the theory of the permanent revolution that all concrete revolutions in individual countries are doomed to failure.

/—/

Mandel's Fourth International described the Soviet Union as "a bureaucratically deformed workers' state", as a special, degenerate transitional society between capitalism and socialism, but acknowledged that the October Revolution overthrew the capitalist system in Russia. Others (such as the International Socialist movement) start from the theory of the impossibility of building socialism in one or more countries and deny that the Soviet Union ever abolished capitalism. What Lenin and Stalin built was not socialism, but "state capitalism" from start to finish.

### **Revolution and the class struggle**

For the Trotskyists, history stopped in a certain sense in 1923. The world revolution failed, according to Trotskyist concepts, as the Russian Revolution did not trigger victorious revolutions in Western Europe, as a springboard to the "final showdown".

Therefore, Trotskyism perceives the great and rich revolutionary history of the 20th century as a single long "Stalinist" perversion.

According to the Trotskyists, no real socialism was ever built in the USSR or the other socialist countries. Trotskyism usually called them "degenerate workers' states", a kind of transitional society that was neither capitalist nor socialist.

The Trotskyists claim that after Trotsky was expelled from the Soviet Union, the revolution developed into a caricature, ruled by a perverted "Stalinist bureaucracy". This "analysis" was then repeated for all new socialist societies and countries.

It is a fact that as soon as the revolution has triumphed in one country, the Trotskyists have been busy slandering it, because according to their logic it is impossible in every way. On the basis of the permanent revolution, Trotskyism has strongly attacked all attempts to build socialism, and above all the Soviet Union in Stalin's time, ostensibly because they "postpone the world revolution" and lead the world revolutionary process astray.

Thus, they also have a ready-made explanation of why the "world revolution" that they themselves have predicted has failed. It is Stalin and the Communists' fault!

Crushing the "Stalinist bureaucracies", according to the Trotskyists, would have a necessary and stimulating effect on the progress of the world revolution. Therefore, the Trotskyists greeted the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the other former socialist countries with enthusiasm!

The crucial problem for the Trotskyists is that reality, revolution and the actual experiences of the international working class do not match their theorizing and formulas.

The working class has carried out the proletarian revolution in a large number of countries and, furthermore, a large number of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist revolutions have been carried out in this [19th] century.

Socialism has actually been built successfully in one country and later in a number of countries. First of all, in the USSR, which, according to Trotsky's predictions, had no chance of survival, not even for a few years. Before Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, he proclaimed that the country would be crushed by the Nazi war machine.

But socialism proved capable of resisting the fascist war of aggression, the most brutal war the world has ever seen.

/—/

Lenin's theoretical justification for the possibility of the revolution triumphing and socialism being built in one country or group of countries was the uneven development of imperialism. The victory of the revolution in Russia and later elsewhere in the world and the construction of these countries as socialist societies have, of course, in practice disproved the Trotskyists' theory of the impossibility of socialism. This is true even if these are former socialist societies where capitalism has been resurrected. This is not because of the "impossibility of socialism", but because the class struggle continues in the socialist countries in conjunction with the pressure and subversion of imperialism and reaction to destroy socialism.

The fact that socialism was concretely frustrated and defeated at a certain point says nothing about the possibility or reality of revolution and socialism in this country or these countries. On the other hand, it tells us something about the sharp class struggle between socialism and capitalism on a world scale. It tells us that the class struggle continues even after the victory of the revolution and that there is still the possibility of counterrevolution in one form or another, and not only through imperialist war or invasion. It was something, for example, that Lenin and Stalin constantly emphasized with great severity, and they carried out the necessary countermeasures against the counterrevolutionary forces.

## **Socialism in one country**

Let us for a moment accept the Trotskyists' presumptions that all attempts to build socialism have been defeated. That only capitalism exists in the world. That a handful of imperialist powers control the whole world; even in this case, the theory of permanent revolution does not hold.

The revolution is and will remain a concrete process in concrete countries or groups of countries, not a simultaneous revolution across the globe.

This is as true today as it was before the October Revolution.

During the First World War, Trotsky himself linked his hopes not to a proletarian revolution in Russia, but to the slogan of a United States of Europe.

*He wrote: "In these historical circumstances the working class, the proletariat, can have no interest in defending the outlived and antiquated national 'fatherland', which has become the main obstacle to economic development. The task of the proletariat is to create a far more powerful fatherland, with far greater power of resistance – the Republican United States of Europe, as the foundation of the United States of the World. Against the stagnation of imperialism, the proletariat can only make a socialist organization of the world economy as today's political program."*

Later, his successors repeated this nonsense with many variations, including the idea of a Republican United States of Europe. And it has even become practical bourgeois politics. Lenin replied that the slogan of a United States of Europe under capitalism is *"either impossible or reactionary"*:

*A United States of the World (not of Europe alone) is the state form of the unification and freedom of nations which we associate with socialism -- until the time when the complete victory of communism brings about the total disappearance of the state, including the democratic. As a separate slogan, however, the slogan of a United States of the World would hardly be a correct one, first, because it merges with socialism; second, because it may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the victory of socialism in a single country is impossible, and it may also create misconceptions as to the relations of such a country to the others....*

*"Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone."*  
(Lenin: On the Slogan for a United States of Europe, Aug. 1915)

## **A revolutionary alternative?**

The Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution encompasses a wide range of aspects beyond the erroneous conception of the world revolutionary process and the rejection of the possibility of the victory of socialism in a single country or group of countries. These other aspects of Trotskyist ideology are also fundamentally opposed to Marxism and the Leninist theory of revolution.

The ideology is based on the lack of faith in the victory of the revolution in a single country or group of countries and in the distrust of the ability of the working class to rally allies around it in the revolution, both in individual countries and on a world scale.

It denies the gradual development of concrete revolutions and of the various elements of the revolutionary world process. It denies the need for a revolutionary strategy and tactics based on the level of development of each country at all times and on the objective revolutionary tasks facing it.

It therefore underestimates the importance of the general democratic tasks, the importance of the national, anti-imperialist and democratic aspect of the revolutionary development on a world scale. It replaces a complicated formulation of strategy and tactics based on the national and international balance of forces, including the creation of the broadest possible class and popular alliances and a broad, concrete political program for the revolutionary movement in a particular country, with schematic revolutionary formulas which, according to the Trotskyists, are applicable everywhere.

/—/

The basic programmatic document expressing Trotskyism's conception of the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary movement is still Trotsky's "Transitional Program" of 1938.

The essence of right-wing opportunism is to separate the day-to-day struggle from the strategy for socialism, from the revolution and the socialist goal. The social democratic parties of all shapes and sizes make the day-to-day struggle everything and socialism nothing. "Left opportunism", on the other hand, places the main emphasis on the perspective, the goal, and denies the importance of the day-to-day struggle and the demands of the day (in the broadest and most comprehensive sense) as the only thing that can prepare the people and develop the mass struggle to the level necessary to overthrow capitalism in a revolutionary situation and replace the state of the bourgeoisie with the new state of the working class.

Trotskyism believes it has found an easy way around these questions: instead of setting a series of day-to-day demands, each of which can be met under capitalism and which can therefore mobilize and organize broad fighting movements, the Trotskyist "Transitional Program" sets out a number of demands. Of these demands it is stated that *"none of the transitional demands can be fully realized as long as the bourgeois regime continues to exist"*. Thus, the "break with capitalism" can exist as a concrete political possibility in any strike under capitalism, any strike can develop into a "general strike" that leads to "a struggle for power", to the creation of a so-called "dual power" – in the Trotskyist, not the Leninist sense – with workers' councils and strike committees. The Trotskyist organizations raise this whole group of formulas in virtually every labor struggle of even moderate importance.

These "radical" demands and methods, which, among many other errors, include the fact that they constantly overestimate the radicalization of the working class, in practice work contrary to their intention: the pseudo-revolutionary ideas are a line of defeat that ultimately give the social democratic reformists free rein. At the same time, the importance of the indispensable leading role of the revolutionary (communist) party is disregarded, both in the day-to-day struggles under capitalism and in a revolutionary situation.

This fundamentally subjective assessment of the class movements and class forces has the consequence that the patient organization of the mass struggles and mass movement is rejected and means that the Trotskyists are constantly tailing the spontaneous struggle. The Trotskyists are always either in the doldrums or in a high state of "revolutionary" exhilaration, helplessly carried away by the alternating ebb and flow of the class struggle.

The most serious flaw in the Trotskyist "Transitional Program" is the bourgeois and reformist view of state power. In reality, it does not at all raise the question of the class character of the bourgeois state and the necessity for the bourgeois state to be overthrown through revolution. The Trotskyists' conception of



the state is parallel to the social democratic one: the bourgeois state can be used to promote socialism, so that more and more socialist elements can be gradually and frictionlessly incorporated into it, for example through nationalization. When Trotskyism adds certain ideas that a "dual power", factory councils and soviets can be created, even under normal capitalist conditions and not in a concrete exceptional situation with a strong revolutionary wave, it is just a "left-radical" icing of the old social democratic pie.

### **Between social democracy and communism**

Trotskyism emerged as a centrist, conciliatory current between social democracy and Lenin's Bolshevism, as a special "left wing" rooted in social-democratic opportunism. This historical origin makes Trotskyism particularly suitable for maneuvering between the two basic lines of the workers' movement: social democratic reformism and the line of revolutionary class struggle, the communist line, which brings together class-conscious workers at the head of the entire working class and broad popular forces in all the struggles of this great revolutionary century.

Within this field, Trotskyism as an international current has shifted in the various historical periods – from before the October Revolution, in the period as opposition in the CPSU, in the 1930s and during the Second World War in the form of a current in exile that sought an international foothold, and in the different post-war periods.

In the different periods, the Trotskyists have used different tactics to establish a kind of "third way" between the reformist, social democratic line, which advocates preserving capitalism forever, and the communist line of revolution, destroying the capitalist state and building a new socialist society.

In its obituary for Ernest Mandel, the International Socialists praised him precisely for emphasizing the need to build a revolutionary alternative to both the social democratic and the "Stalinist (read: communist) parties" throughout the post-war period.

The fact that in the post-war period, and especially since the 1960s, Trotskyism has been given greater political scope is due to a number of factors:

The betrayal of the working class and socialism by social democratic reformism has become increasingly apparent and has led social democracy into a strategic crisis. Its obvious role as the main support of capitalist society, which is often preferred by the ruling bourgeois party, naturally leads to disillusionment in the social base of the party, among the members and voters from the working class. This is the main reason for the strategic crisis in, among others, the Western European social democratic parties, a crisis that for many decades has undermined their positions and led to widespread defections of their members and supporters.

Trotskyism is addressed not the least to the ever-renewed current of the left that is breaking with social democracy and reformism. The so-called "revolutionary alternative" is intended to prevent the flow from shifting to clearly revolutionary, communist positions.

/—/

In reality, there are only two basic directions that are possible for the labor movement: the bourgeois direction, reformism and opportunism, or proletarian Marxism-Leninism. Either the path of class collaboration to maintain capitalism, or the path of scientific socialism to create the new socialist society.

/—/

## **The parasitic nature of Trotskyism**

The ideology and political sphere of action of Trotskyism, its historical role and development, are the basis of one of the conspicuous features of the movement and all its organizations: the role of parasites on the main political currents of the labor movement and the mass struggle.

Trotskyism looks right and left at the same time. Trotskyist organizations rarely refer to themselves as Trotskyist, preferring other terms: "revolutionary Marxists", "revolutionary socialists" or even "democratic socialists" when they look to the Social Democrats, while they present themselves as "Leninists" and "Bolsheviks" when they look in the direction of the communists.

In above-mentioned resolution of the 10th World Congress of the Fourth International, which put the building of "revolutionary parties" on the agenda, these parties are called "revolutionary" and "revolutionary-Marxist". They should be built on the basis of the emergence of "a new vanguard of a mass character", as it is called.

/—/

The confusion of terms for the same thing – the organization and ideology of Trotskyism – obviously contributes to making it difficult to identify this current, which uses the definitions of other political currents without inhibition.

The Trotskyists regard the concrete struggles and movements of the working class both as an opportunity to spread the Trotskyist schemes and formulas, and as a field of activity for recruitment to the Trotskyist organizations. It is the Trotskyist ideology and organizational thinking that allows them not only to support such struggles in order to develop them to the maximum, but always to introduce extraneous purposes and intentions into the struggle, and it always ends with a call to organize with the Trotskyists.

## **A furious hatred of communism**

The most prominent feature of Trotskyism as an international current, a feature that characterizes all Trotskyist groupings, is an uncontrollable hatred of the communist parties based on the foundations of Marxism-Leninism, and of all the successful revolutions and attempts to build socialism that have taken place in this century.

The history of Trotskyism is first and foremost a constant struggle against communism and Marxism-Leninism under the slogan of the "struggle against Stalinism". Today, Trotskyism actively and to a large extent contributes to revising the history of the working class and socialism, a process that bourgeois historians are also engaged in. Its aim is to rewrite and reinterpret the revolutionary struggles in an anti-revolutionary direction.

The struggle of Trotskyism against the Soviet Union and the international communist movement during the Stalin era is well known.

During the Gorbachev period, when the final transition to a Western-style capitalist system was being prepared in the Soviet Union, the trials of the 1930s against Trotskyists and others condemned as counterrevolutionaries were labeled "show trials" and the judgments "annulled." Western Trotskyists such as Isaac Deutscher were summoned as Soviet experts and advisers to governments on matters of the

rehabilitation of the "innocent victims of Stalin's terror" at the very time when the privatization of social property was gaining momentum.

They were accused of undermining socialism and trying to restore capitalism. It is not accidental, of course, but historically perfectly logical, that forces such as Gorbachev and Yeltsin, who actually carried out the final restoration of capitalism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, acquitted their predecessors, who had been slowed down in their counterrevolutionary activities.

However, capitalist Russia's issuance of certificates of innocence and the award of honors to the pioneers of the counterrevolution cannot change the historical truth about these forces, which were fought against under socialism and celebrated under capitalism.

We have to note that the temporarily last act of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe also took place with expert Trotskyist assistance.

### **In the service of counterrevolution**

Today, international Trotskyism is eagerly trying to rewrite the revolutionary history of the 20th century in a Trotskyist spirit. This is partly as a continuation of three-quarters of a century of struggle against the international communist movement, and partly in the attempt to replace Leninism with the theory and political practice with Trotskyism.

Trotskyist historiography is characterized by a pronounced hostility and supercritical attitude towards the actual revolutions that have taken place, by its attempts to hide or whitewash the real positions and role of the Trotskyist movement as an active participant in these processes, and by its attempts to hide the fact that it coincides with a bourgeois revision of history.

It would take far too far to review the entire revolutionary history of the [last] century and the role of the Trotskyists in it. On all crucial points, international Trotskyism has chosen a line that would have led to defeat if it had been translated into mass politics. It would not only have been, as it has been, a more or less limited obstacle to the revolution, a source of confusion and division of the revolutionary forces.

Let us take the attitude of Trotskyism to the fight against fascism as an example:

Trotskyism was opposed to support for the democratic countries attacked by fascism. When the Soviet Union was later attacked by Hitler's Germany, and the character of World War II thus changed, the Trotskyists declared that the war was still a war between the imperialist powers, and opposed the alliance between the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain, which had a significant impact on the defeat of Hitler and fascism.

In the post-war period, Trotskyism's denial of the possibility of revolution and socialism in one or several countries, the rejection of the anti-fascist popular fronts and of the national and democratic elements of the anti-imperialist struggle, have led the Trotskyists into direct confrontation with national liberation movements led by communist parties. In the Chinese Revolution, in Vietnam, Korea and many other places, the Trotskyist groups and the Fourth International itself stood against the strategies and lines that led to the victory of these revolutions.

/—/

The Trotskyist literature is overflowing with an unquenchable hatred of the Communist Parties and, not the least, of their leaderships. It is a sewer of invective and aggressive attacks on all the "Stalinists" who spearheaded the greatest and most important popular struggles and revolutions of this last (20th) century: Stalin and the leadership of the CPSU, Georgi Dimitrov, Mao Zedong, Ho Chi-Minh, Kim Il Sung, Enver Hoxha, Fidel Castro and many more have been and continue to be targets of the raging Trotskyist propaganda of incitement. Sometimes it tries to camouflage the incitement as a "criticism of the personality cults", but in its content it is directed at the concrete revolutions, the construction of socialism and the leading force in it, the communist parties.

In return, the Trotskyist Tito and the Titoites defended Yugoslavia in its break with the former socialist camp and the international communist movement. They have always looked for fissures and divisions among the communists in order to exploit them for their own ends. They enthusiastically received Khrushchev's so-called "secret report" on Stalin and the "showdown with Stalinism", which initiated the counterrevolutionary process of modern revisionism, which eventually led to the fall of socialism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They saw this as a historical confirmation of their own struggle against the formerly socialist Soviet Union and the international communist movement.

Even the final capitalist counterrevolution in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union were taken as proof of the correctness of Trotskyism's theory of permanent revolution and the impossibility of socialism in one country. Thus, Trotskyism contributes to concealing the real historical course of the international class struggle and the class struggle under socialism, thus appearing in parallel with bourgeois historiography. It sees the entire Soviet period as a single, static period without its own internal dynamics and course of development, as an unfortunate parenthesis in world history that basically "contradicts the course of history".

**The genuine communist parties are systematically slandered as undemocratic, "Stalinist" command centers, as the dictatorship of the leadership over the members, built on the discipline of the dead. It is the Leninist principle of organisation, democratic centralism, which is particularly attacked. It is this principle that allows the parties to act uniformly and as a unified force in the class struggle and revolution, which is the prerequisite for their vigor and makes them parties of revolutionary action.**

### **The role of Trotskyism in Eastern Europe**

Trotskyist organizations played a particularly active role in the end game surrounding the fall of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Counterrevolutionary movements such as Solidarity in Poland and Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia were hailed by the Trotskyists as "genuine revolutionary movements". The Trotskyists combined their energies with those of imperialism and the entire Western reaction in supporting the victory of these "popular movements" – that is, securing imperialism and the key positions of the international monopolies in the economies of these countries as Western-style capitalist systems.

In the past, Tito's break with international communism in 1948, the counterrevolutionary events in Poland and Hungary in 1956, and Dubcek's so-called Prague Spring in 1968, his "socialism with a human face", were hailed by the Trotskyists as genuine revolutionary movements directed against the Stalinist bureaucracy.

/—/

The Marxist-Leninists have repeatedly stressed that the danger of capitalist restoration also exists in those countries where the revolution has triumphed and socialism has been built, and that the class struggle

continues under socialism with the support of world imperialism and reaction. A peaceful counterrevolution is not only a theoretical and political possibility.

After the defeat of Hitler's Germany, which had tried in vain to crush socialism by force of arms, and the development of nuclear weapons, which would turn a war against socialism into an adventure with enormous risk also for imperialism, the strategy of peaceful counterrevolution, the strategy of the degeneration of socialism from within, became the very core of imperialism's struggle against socialism.

The arms and nuclear race were also methods which, through sustained pressure, would contribute to the degeneration of the Communist Parties and the socialist states, and at the same time increase and sharpen all contradictions, exploit all the flaws, shortcomings and problems of these countries in order to fan the flames of discontent and unrest.

It is obvious that Mandel and his Fourth International, these self-appointed experts of the socialist revolution, were completely and fundamentally wrong when they proclaimed that the "political revolution" they celebrated was no threat to the achievements of socialism, and would rule out any possibility of returning to capitalism. The activities and false assurances of the Trotskyists were an active part of the counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Mandel enthusiastically welcomed the fall of the Wall and the "mass popular movements" used as tools of open counterrevolution.

/—/

Trotskyism is an international political current that acts as the foremost spearhead of opportunism, social democracy in the labor and revolutionary movement, with the special historical task of attacking the communist parties and Marxism-Leninism.

It is, of course, not identical to traditional social democracy, but goes hand in hand with it. It complements social democracy's attack on communism from the right with attacks from the "left". It speaks of permanent revolution, of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", of the necessity of a Bolshevik party, etc., but works in practice to undermine the Bolshevik parties, socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to spread maximum confusion in the ranks of the revolutionaries.

As an international political current, it offers its "program of world revolution" to the working class, youth and intellectuals. It has been shown that Trotskyism can, to a certain extent and for a certain period of time, deceive young people without solid revolutionary experience, and petty-bourgeois intellectuals who are attracted by phrase-mongering, the rejection of the fighting discipline of the working class and a petty-bourgeois mixture of radical "visions" and reformist practices – as reflected in the theory and program of Trotskyism.

All the facts show that Trotskyism is not "revolutionary Marxism", not "Bolshevism", but petty-bourgeois anti-communism.

*The article was published in its entirety in the formerly revolutionary Daily Worker Aug.-Sep. 1995.*