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On the Problem of Trotskyism

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Trotskyism: A Deformed Worker's Ideology; Or, a Reiteration of the Antagonistic History of Trotskyism and Leninism

Introduction

Lenin was forced to struggle against Trotsky from roughly 1905 until his death in 1924. After that period, Leninists assumed the mantle of struggle against Trotskyism—a task which we unfortunately must continue today. It continues to be necessary because Trotskyism continues to be a derailing force in the journey towards class consciousness. Because Trotskyism's assertions against Leninism and Leninist projects are based largely on the reframing of anticommunist arguments, they are easily digested by the new socialist. The new socialist can uphold Trotskyism without confronting the bourgeois, anticommunist history they have been taught. Outside of the Bolshevik Party from 1917 until 1924, Trotskyism tends to condemn real world socialist experiments with the same adjectives and the same statistics used by the anticommunist historians. Because of this, Trotskyism's influence is most sabotaging for the new socialist, who has had little time to sufficiently study history. While we would put forward that a dialectical materialist analysis of history often demonstrates the historical correctness of Leninism, time is needed to attain such a position; and, until this time, new socialists are susceptible to a bombardment of Trotskyist sloganeering: "Stalinist, bureaucratic, authoritarian, brutal regimes."

Our usual refutations of Trotskyism tend to assume a breadth of historical knowledge and as such usually attract readership from other Leninists, not potential future Leninists. Conversely, this essay is targeted towards the newer socialist, in an attempt to intervene before Trotskyism can mislead them and allow them to become ossified as ineffective members of the class struggle. While the length is far greater than I had hoped, this piece requires relatively little prior historical knowledge and should not be overly academic—or too jargon- and theory-laden—to read. This work aims to show the reader that Trotskyism evolved separately from Leninism, and that Trotskyism cannot claim to be a continuation of the work of Lenin or the Bolshevik Revolution. This work aims to support that claim by demonstrating that the major themes of Leninism have been consistent from before 1910 until today, and that the major criticisms Lenin had of Trotsky before and after the revolution still describe Trotskyism’s ideological deformations today.

There are two histories that Trotskyists present. The first is their implied history. Adherents of Trotsky imply that Trotskyism is a continuation, with slight improvements, of the "true" Leninism as it existed before the "Stalinist" betrayal. This version of history requires a complete lack of knowledge regarding the period from 1903-1917. Because history shows this implied history is categorically false, as we’ll see, Trotskyists have had to construct another history in line with a cursory understanding of the October Revolution.

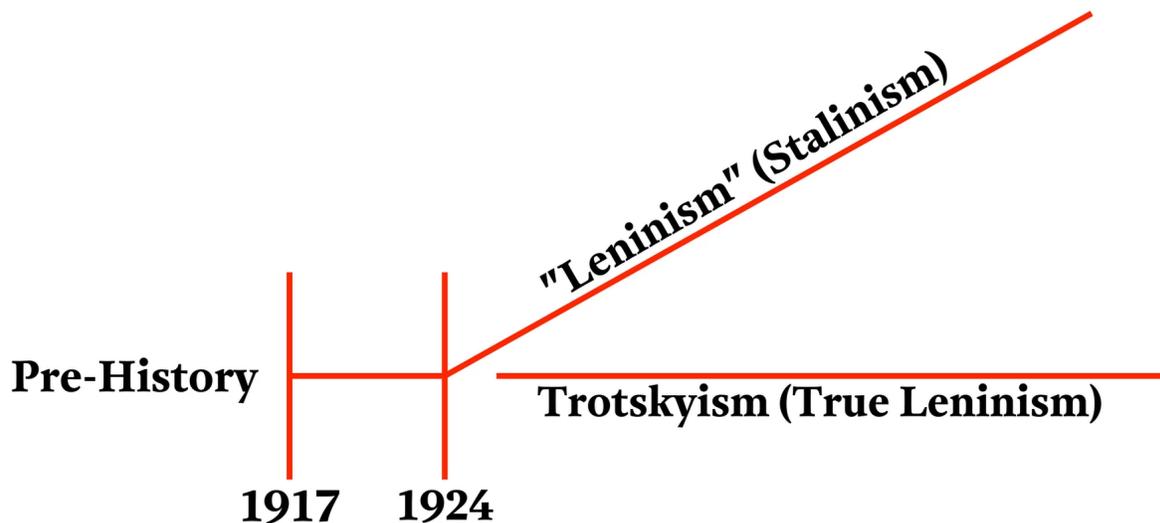


Fig 1. The implied history of Trotskyism

Thus, Trotskyism’s official history admits that Trotsky(ism) and Lenin(ism) struggled against each other from 1903 until 1917. This history states that the two great revolutionaries developed competing ideologies, which both had positive and both had negative aspects. Then in 1917, when the two forces combined and Trotsky finally joined the Bolsheviks, the two great philosopher-revolutionaries together accomplished the revolution. This version of history suggests that when Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks, Trotskyism ceased to be; that it was absorbed

by Leninism, lending Leninism some of its characteristics. This history also suggests that Lenin was a quasi-Trotskyist by the time of his death by virtue of “upholding” the theory of Permanent Revolution. Only after the “Stalinist betrayal” of the Party in 1924, according to this study, was Trotskyism reborn. However, in this story, it was reborn in name only. The reborn Trotskyism was the true Leninism, or “Bolshevik-Leninism,” with only minor improvements made by Trotsky, while “Leninism” was truly “Stalinism.”

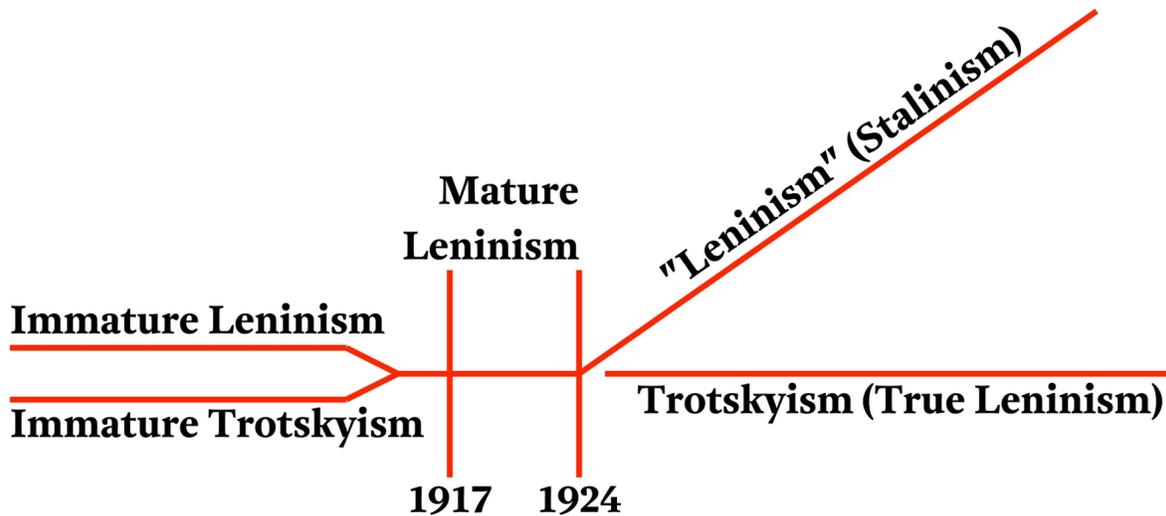


Figure 2. The Official History of Trotskyism

This line of history often goes hand-in-hand with the notion that Leninism was formulated by Stalin in 1924. This version of history asserts that, because of this, Leninism is actually "Stalinism" due to a singular figure, Stalin, creating the ideology. Yes, Foundations of Leninism, a collection of speeches delivered at Sverdlov University by Stalin, was published in 1924, shortly after Lenin's death. Does this mean Leninism was created in one stroke by Stalin in 1924? Of course not. Marxism was not created in one stroke by Marx. It was forged through a lifetime of work by Marx and Engels, and was influenced by the utopian socialists of the time. Mao Zedong Thought was not formulated in one stroke by Mao, but over the course of decades work by Mao, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, and many others. Similarly, Leninism was not created in one stroke by Stalin; this is an idealistic and an anti-dialectical position. Leninism could not have been formulated solely by Stalin, nor could it have been formulated solely by Lenin. Leninism, as a distinct political theory, was formulated through years of pre- and post-revolutionary struggle. It was formulated primarily by Lenin, but also by the whole of the Bolshevik experience, as well as by lessons of the non-Bolshevik and non-Russian experience. We will elaborate later, but as early as 1910, Lenin refuted Trotsky for implying that Leninism was anything other than Bolshevism. [1] This has remained true. Leninism is the personification of the trend of Bolshevism, a statement Stalin agreed with:

"Bolshevism and Leninism are one. They are two names for the same thing. Hence, the theory of the division of Leninism into two parts is a theory intended to destroy Leninism, to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism." [2]

As early as 1905, Bolshevism, or Leninism, existed as a political trend. As we will see, the primary characteristics of Bolshevism remained stable from 1905 until it was labeled a "betrayal." How could Stalin have created something that had existed for two decades prior to having come to power?

History suggests that this version of history, where Leninism and Trotskyism evolved separately but came together to form what we now call Trotskyism, is also quite false. The truth, which we will outline here, is that Leninism and Trotskyism evolved separately and struggled with each other. Trotsky entered the Party in 1917 and by all accounts was a model Bolshevik until power was secured. At this point, coinciding with Lenin's decreasing health, Trotskyism began to re-emerge. After Lenin's death, Trotsky attempted more openly to replace Leninism with Trotskyism until his expulsion, exile and assassination. To date, Trotskyism remains relatively unchanged from its ideological structure in 1905 and is not derived in any significant way from Leninism.

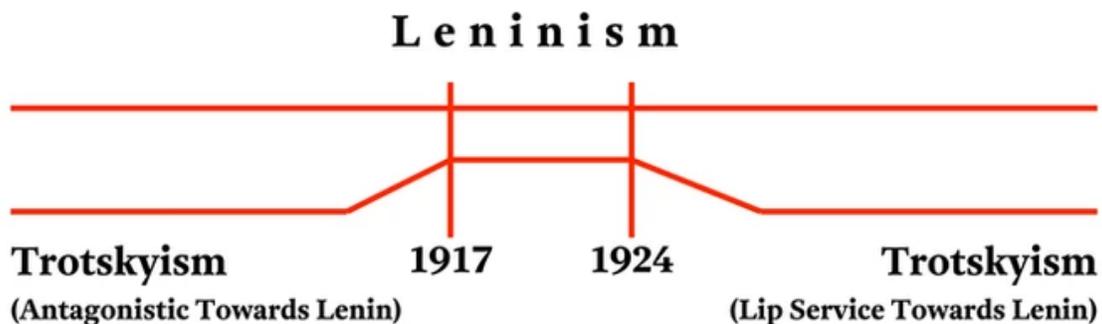


Figure 3. The General History of Trotskyism and Leninism

Before we begin to review the history, we should discuss two of the several irreconcilable contradictions between Trotskyism and Leninism—between Trotskyism and Bolshevism.

1. The contradiction between the Bolshevik theory of the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry and Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution.

a. The Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry is the theory that the toiling masses together (e.g. the proletariat and peasantry) could seize power and construct socialism without intervention from a fully industrialized, proletarianized force.

b. Permanent Revolution is the theory that if the people were to seize power in a nation that was still predominantly peasantry, it would be impossible to build socialism because the peasantry is generally counter-revolutionary. Instead, the only goal could be to “hold onto” power until rescue could come from a more proletarianized state.

2. The contradiction between Bolshevik Party Discipline and Trotsky’s Factionalism.

a. The Bolsheviks understood Party Discipline to mean Democratic Centralism. In Democratic Centralism, there is a balance between Democracy and Centralism. Democracy exists to ensure that each can argue their opinion on an issue. Centralism exists to ensure that once the collective reaches a decision, each member must subordinate their personal opinion to accomplish the goals of the collective. Simply put, if the Party decides something, members are expected to refrain from condemning the decision or sabotaging the efforts of the Party.

b. Factionalism is the creation of sub-groups or wings of a party. The Bolsheviks were anti-factionalist, believing that factions were against Democratic Centralism and that factionalism inevitably led to splitting and weakening of parties.

These two fundamental conflicts have continued in the main from 1905 until present day, demonstrating that the relationship between Trotskyism and Leninism has remained in the main, the same since 1905. The topic of history is best divided into four primary time periods. Pre-October, Post-October, Post-Lenin, Post-Everyone, and Modern. Let’s look.

Pre-October

Leninism and Trotskyism evolved separately in the pre-October Revolution period, in the same way that two species might have both similar and differing characteristics within the same ecosystem—both filling distinct niches. Both Lenin and Trotsky, along with many other great (and not so great) revolutionaries were members of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) immediately after the turn of the 20th century. This party was immature, and developed two major factions over time, which became distinct around 1903 at the Second Party Congress.

The majority, the Bolsheviks and the minority, the Mensheviks, both had names derived from their meaning in Russian. The Bolsheviks were those who were in the majority on opinions fundamental to the Party. The Mensheviks, those who were of the minority opinion, tried to prevent decisions from being made based on majority rule. They believed that small factions of the Party must have the power to ignore centralism, to behave counter to the majority’s wishes. At the Second Party Congress, Lenin immediately sided with the Bolsheviks, while Trotsky aimed to be a “centrist” and allied with, but did not join, the Mensheviks. [3]

Trotsky’s *Our Political Tasks* was published in 1904 and was intended as a polemic against Lenin and what would become known as Bolshevism. While he later disavowed this piece for its

anti-centralist and anti-discipline stances, his actions remained aligned with his 1904 stance for the rest of his life.

"By arguing that [...] socialist ideology was brought into the labor movement from outside, by the revolutionary intelligentsia, Lenin's theory was an 'orthodox theocracy.' His scheme of organization was fit for a party which would substitute itself for the working classes, act as a proxy in their name and on their behalf, regardless of what the workers felt and thought." [4]

Here as early as 1904 Trotsky suggested that the party organization was anti-worker and that Lenin was theocratic. The party organization that was to be avoided was Democratic Centralism:

"In the internal politics of the Party these methods lead, as we shall see below, to the Party organization 'substituting' itself for the Party, the Central Committee substituting itself for the Party organization, and finally the dictator substituting himself for the Central Committee.

"Because 'centralism,' and this at least must be understood, does not mean the Central Committee, the Central Organ or the Council but something much bigger: above all, it requires the active participation of all members in the whole life of the Party. Of course, I am speaking of 'European' centralism and not autocratic-Asiatic centralism. This latter does not require but rather excludes any such participation." [5]

Trotsky continued to suggest that Democratic Centralism was not a worker's organizational technique at all:

"The 'centralism' and 'discipline' of the Jacobins which Lenin so much admires were not borrowed by these 'bourgeois-individualist' revolutionary intellectuals from the proletariat disciplined in the school of the factory but developed directly 'out of themselves.'" [6a]

In these lines, Trotsky suggested that Lenin was both a Jacobin and a bourgeois-individualist. Further, he suggested that Lenin's ideology was not a worker's ideology, because it did not "borrow" from the proletariat, but instead "developed directly 'out of themselves.'" [6b] This means that as Lenin was a bourgeois-individualist, Centralism was bourgeois-individualism. How subordinating your individual opinion to that of the collective decision is individualist, and how Trotsky of all people could claim that someone else was an individualist is not fully explained.

Elsewhere in 1905, Stalin wrote Briefly About the Disagreements in the Party to a Georgian audience: "Our 'Mensheviks' are really too tiresome!" Like Lenin, Stalin ridiculed their anti-discipline stances. "Beware of the 'Majority' (i.e. the Bolsheviks), they are strangers, 'infidels!'" he sarcastically wrote. Steadfastly from 1905 to 1917 and beyond, Stalin upheld Leninism or Bolshevism. Writing as early as 1905 that Lenin was the "ideological representation of the majority, the Bolsheviks. He described Lenin's What is to be Done? as the "splendid" theoretical birth of Leninism and continued: "Our task is always to be at the head of the movement and combat tirelessly all those - whether they be foes or 'friends' - who hinder the accomplishment of these tasks." Friends in this sentence refers to the Mensheviks and to factionalism. [7]

In his 1907 book entitled *1905*, Trotsky explained that he was hostile to both Menshevism and Bolshevism:

"While the anti-revolutionary aspects of Menshevism have already become fully apparent, those of Bolshevism are likely to become a serious threat only in the event of victory." [8]

Continuing on, Trotsky wrote how the Bolsheviks believed that class struggle would end after revolutionary triumph. Moreover, he went on to suggest that the Bolsheviks were "scared" of conducting a decisive class struggle against the Peasantry. Of course, being a "centrist" Trotsky had choice words for the Mensheviks as well. We can see already that Trotsky disagreed with the Bolshevik view of the Peasantry. Much later, in 1922's Preface to *1905*, Trotsky stated plainly that the concept of Permanent Revolution had been born before this piece, but was fully articulated in 1905. [9]

Conversely, in his 1905 *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy*, Lenin outlined the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry, and refuted the notion of Permanent Revolution:

"The proletariat must carry to completion the democratic revolution by allying itself with the mass of the peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of autocracy and to paralyze the instability of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution by allying itself to the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyze the instability of the peasantry and petty-bourgeoisie." [10]

Trotsky believed that the proletariat must struggle against the peasantry as well as the former bourgeoisie until the victorious proletariat could be "saved" by more civilized revolutionary forces. Conversely, Lenin believed that the proletariat should ally with peasant and semi-proletarian masses to build socialism without the need of any "aid," thereby defeating feudalism and capitalism together, before full industrialization and proletarianization. This was the basis of the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry, and suggests that, in direct contradiction to Permanent Revolution, the unity of Proletariat and Peasantry was sufficient to maintain state power and build socialism, with no mention of needing to be "rescued" by the advanced capitalist countries.

In *On the Two Lines of Revolution*, published in 1915, Lenin gave a more thorough discussion on the Permanent Revolution. "Trotsky, who is repeating his 'original' 1905 theory and refuses to give some thought to the reason, why in the course of ten years, life has been bypassing his splendid theory." [11] Like the Bolsheviks, Trotsky believed in revolution. Like the Mensheviks, Trotsky had a chauvinistic attitude towards the Peasantry. He argued that the peasantry was too backwards, stratified, and that they exhibited too much petit-bourgeois thought to have any revolutionary potential. In fact, Lenin wrote that according to Trotsky, "(in) Russia a 'national' revolution is impossible; we are living in the era of imperialism," and "imperialism does not contra-pose the bourgeois nation to the old regime, but the proletariat to the bourgeois nation." [12]

We see that in the Pre-October period, Lenin(ism) and Trotsky(ism) were already in stark contradiction regarding the relationship between the Peasantry and the Revolution. As Marxists, as people who place a large emphasis on class, this was no small trifle. Thus, the first major contradiction was clearly delineated and observed pre-October. What then of the second—the issue of Party discipline? Lenin summarized:

"At the end of 1903, Trotsky was an ardent Menshevik [...] In 1904—05, he deserted the Mensheviks and occupied a vacillating position [...] now proclaiming his absurdly Left 'permanent revolution' theory. In 1906—07, he approached the Bolsheviks, and in the spring of 1907 he declared that he was in agreement with Rosa Luxemburg." [13]

In 1907's *Speech on the Report of the Activities of the Duma Groups*, Lenin mentioned the outcomes of Trotsky's "centrism."

"He fulminated against us for introducing our 'unacceptable' resolution. He threatened an outright split." [14]

Indeed, as early as 1907, and from then until his death, Lenin took issue with Trotsky's lack of discipline and adherence to democratic centralism. This is unsurprisingly paralleled today, where Leninists identify lack of discipline as one of the chief deformations of Trotskyism and one of the reasons for the constant splits in their parties. Trotsky's lack of discipline manifested as factionalism and threatened the unity of all of the revolutionaries in Russia.

In a 1909 letter to Zinoviev, Lenin wrote, "Have you read Trotsky's letter to Inok? If you have, I hope it has convinced you that Trotsky behaves like a despicable careerist and factionalist [...] He pays lip service to the Party and behaves worse than any of the Factionalists." [15] To Lenin and Leninism, party discipline is paramount. Centralism, accepting the will of the majority, is paramount. Therefore, before 1910, we can see the two great contradictions between Leninism and Trotskyism, on the role of the peasantry in socialism (i.e. the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry versus Permanent Revolution) and party discipline had already been acknowledged.

In 1910, Lenin's State of Affairs cited Trotsky's use of "Leninism" as a pejorative term for the Bolsheviks [[16]]. In this text, Lenin shows that Trotsky bluntly stated that he was no Leninist. Lenin wrote here that Leninism was simply Bolshevism, ergo, in 1910, Trotsky was still fundamentally anti-Bolshevik. So what was Trotsky at this time? Lenin went on to say that the Bolsheviks had been fighting Menshevism since 1903-1905. He highlighted Martov and Trotsky as Menshevism's primary thinkers and said that the policy pursued by Trotsky was "an attempt to create a new faction." So was Trotsky a Menshevik? Is it that simple? While this has since been argued, Lenin did not believe this to be true:

"Trotsky, on the other hand, represents only his own personal vacillations and nothing more. In 1903 he was a Menshevik; he abandoned Menshevism in 1904, returned to the Mensheviks in 1905 and merely flaunted ultra-revolutionary phrases; in 1906 he left them again [...] One day Trotsky plagiarizes from the ideological stock-in-trade of one faction; the next day he plagiarizes from that of another, and therefore declares himself to be

standing above both factions [...]Trotsky represents only his own faction and enjoys a certain amount of confidence exclusively among the otzovists and the liquidators." [17]

No, Trotsky should not be called a Menshevik. Lenin wrote in 1911 that, "Trotsky's puny group supports policies of lying and deceiving the workers... therefore you have the essence of 'Trotskyism.'" [18] Trotsky may have allied with the Mensheviks at times, but he was not one. He was a Trotskyist, a separate entity from all previous, whose platform was, according to Lenin, "lying and deceiving the workers."

Lenin provided additional context for us. The Mensheviks and Bolsheviks did begin to drift towards two different trends in 1903, but the split was not complete until 1912. Trotsky denied the completeness of this split. At this time, Trotsky worked to create the August Bloc—a collection of what Lenin called "every anti-Bolshevik" group of socialists in Russia, supposedly acting "above factionalism." Lenin wrote that, "Trotsky's 'non-factionalism' is, actually, splitting tactics, in that it shamelessly flouts the will of the majority of the workers. If we are splitters, why have not you, uniters, united amongst yourselves?" [19]

As we can see, by 1911, both "Leninism" and "Trotskyism" had been coined. The terms were not simply used to assign people based on who they were loyal to (this use would've likely been left for terms like Trotskyite and Leninite), but were used to describe clearly distinct and separate trends. Leninism meant Bolshevism. Trotskyism meant something else.

The names have been clearly defined, as have the major differences in the ideology of Leninism and Trotskyism. Are Lenin's polemics too vague? Can it be inferred that Lenin's hostility was overblown? After all, he was, arguably, history's greatest polemicist. Perhaps we can argue that he treated Kautsky with more hostility, but few others. In 1914, he specifically called Trotskyists "August Bloc People," and dared them to actually unite—"Do something; don't merely talk about it!" He also noted that, "Plekhanov and Trotsky [...] for the last ten years have been giving themselves credit for failure to fall into step with the mass Social Democratic worker's trend." [20]

How could Trotsky write against Centralism, write for Factions, engage in splitting, yet still condemn Leninists for being splitters? Perhaps it is as Lenin said in 1914, "Trotsky has never yet had a firm opinion on any important question of Marxism," [21] and Trotsky simply vacillated positions again. However, is this true? I would disagree—Trotsky's Permanent Revolution, based on a chauvinistic misunderstanding of the peasantry, is a firm opinion apparent in the main from 1905 until his death. Trotskyism's factionalism has also been a firm opinion from the 1900s until today.

In the pre-October 1917 period, Trotsky was not a Bolshevik. Bolshevism was synonymous with Leninism, which demonstrates that Trotsky was no Leninist during this period. Trotskyism, having originated around 1905, can therefore neither be temporally nor ideologically a continuation of Bolshevism or Leninism as the "Bolshevik-Leninists" want us to believe. These differences go beyond names and origin stories; they penetrate to the very core matters of party discipline and class struggle.

According to the other history of Trotskyism, this decade's long disagreement was to be brushed aside in 1917, when Lenin and Trotsky, the two Titans of Russian Communism, would unite to lead the revolution—that is, if the Trotskyist conception of history is to be believed. In August 1917, Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks, months before the Revolution. After 12 years of struggle against Leninism, was Trotskyism finished as a distinct trend? Was Trotskyism absorbed by the Bolsheviks?

Post-October

Based on the history outlined above, it is impossible for the Trotskyists to imply that Trotskyism is simply a continuation of Leninism to those who have read Russia's revolutionary history. To mislead the crowd, Trotskyism must move on from their implied history to a more carefully crafted tale. While the Pre-October period remains de-emphasized in their version of history, it is not ignored.

This history goes: Lenin and Trotsky were ideological rivals of relatively equal importance. In 1917, the two settled their differences and united. The imperfections of Trotsky(ism) and Lenin(ism) were reciprocally fixed as the two ideologies merged. Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks while Lenin adopted the Permanent Revolution. Then, the two nearly equal co-leaders of the Bolsheviks carried out the Revolution and led the new state together until 1924, when Lenin died and Stalin seized power for his own nefarious reasons, betraying the new Leninism.

**Is this history true? Were they united? Was Leninism reforged with Trotskyist admixture?
Let's see.**

Two of the major conflicts pre-October were Trotsky(ism)'s differing understanding of Party discipline and a differing understanding of the role of the peasantry. After October, one of the primary manifestations of these two issues focused on the role of Russian Trade Unions. The vast majority of the Party agreed that "persuasive" methods should be used to encourage consciousness and production in the Trade Unions, while Trotsky believed "militarization" of the trade unions was better, based on his observations of efficiency in the military. The Party decided to pursue the persuasive route, against Trotsky's arguments. Despite the Party's decision, Trotsky abandoned discipline and Centralism to continue to argue for militarization. Four years after joining the party, and three years after power had been seized, Trotsky still did not adhere to the Bolshevik idea of discipline, and still clung to factionalism. Lenin was once again forced to reproach Trotsky, now on these trade unions. "Comrade Trotsky's pamphlet [...] I am amazed at the number of theoretical mistakes and glaring blunders it contains." [22]

In his 1921 *The Party Crisis* [23], as well as *Once Again on the Trade Unions, The Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin*, Lenin wrote on the topic that Trotsky's idea of "shaking up" (i.e. militarizing) the trade unions was against the majority of the party's opinion that union workers could easily be "persuaded" to become class conscious—that a gentle hand was recommended. Once again, this demonstrated the stark differences in understanding of class struggle between the two trends. Trotsky sought to continue discussing the settled matter of persuasion versus militarization. However, "There [were] no such disagreements, Comrade

Trotsky has tried to point them out, and failed." Once again, Trotsky's line had lost. And once again, Trotsky would not accept the outcome. Lenin continued:

"I don't know whether this is due to another change in Comrade Trotsky's platform or intentions [...] What is the result? Less than a month has passed since Trotsky started this, 'broad discussion,' on December 25. And you will be hard pressed to find one responsible party worker in a hundred who is not fed up with discussion and has not realized its futility." [24]

Promotion of one's own ambitions, despite the full might of the collective, is not Democratic Centralism, discipline, Bolshevism, or Leninism. It is individualism, idealism, and quasi-Menshevism.

Trotsky had recently written that Lenin, "wants at all costs to disrupt or shelve discussion of the matter." Lenin, less than one year before dying, argued that Trotsky was still a factionalist, which was, as we've seen, a damning thing to be in Lenin's eyes. Trotsky on the other hand, was, less than one year before Lenin died, complaining that Lenin still "wants at all costs to disrupt or shelve discussion of the matter." It is interesting that Trotsky's condemnations of Lenin's Leninism in 1923 mirror so closely his condemnations of Stalin's Stalinism a few years later.

It is not surprising that Trotsky ridiculed Lenin's discipline and Centralism. In 1923, Trotsky acted alone by writing his *Draft Theses on Trade Unions*, which was disagreeable to 19 of the 20 members of the Central Committee—effectively demonstrating that he was outlining and promoting his personal theses as a platform. In doing this, Trotsky invited the party to "choose one of the two trends." More accurately would have been to ask the Party to "choose between 19/20 and Trotsky." Once again, Trotsky promoted factionalism, a faction representing 1 in 20 members of the Central Committee [25]. Lenin ended the piece by asking:

"But I ask any party member; don't you find this attack and insistence on 'choosing' between two trends in the Trade Union movement rather sudden? What is there for us to do but stare in astonishment at the fact that after three years of the proletarian dictatorship, even one member can be found to 'attack' the two trends issue in this way?"

For three years, Bolshevism, Leninism, discipline, centralism, and anti-factionalism had held power with success. How, upon seeing the victory of discipline, did Trotsky still push for factions? Because his ideas were held by only a faction, because if they adhered to Democratic Centralism, there was no way his Permanent Revolution theory would ever be implemented, as it was unpopular. It should be noted that these attempts were not abject failures. Trotsky was a very charismatic person and his theories sound perfectly reasonable to those with a dogmatic view of "Orthodox Marxism." Peaking in 1921, "Comrade Trotsky still had about a fifth of the delegates to the Party Conference on his side." [26]

Another area of disagreement, which was intensely debated during this time but existed before October and continues until this day, was that of the National Question. Stalin outlined four qualifications of Nations: common language, common culture, common geography, and shared

history. He wrote the right to self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny:

"That no one has the right to forcibly interfere in the life of the nation, to destroy its schools and other institutions, to violate its habits and customs, to repress its language, or curtail its rights." [27]

One can read further to Lenin's Theses on the National Question and Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions if they wish to verify that Stalin's statements are in concert with Lenin's own. [28] [29] In 1928, after Lenin's death and under Stalin, the USSR continued upholding the nationhood of Black Americans. [30] However, and perhaps most importantly, Stalin's most critical theoretical work may be found in his 1913 *Marxism and the National Question*:

The workers therefore combat and will continue to combat the policy of national oppression in all its forms, from the most subtle to the most crude, as well as the policy of inciting nations against each other in all its forms [...] Social-Democracy in all countries therefore proclaims the right of nations to self-determination [...] The right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right forcibly to interfere in the life of the nation, to destroy its schools and other institutions, to violate its habits and customs, to repress its language, or curtail its rights [...] This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democracy will support every custom and institution of a nation. While combating the coercion of any nation, it will uphold only the right of the nation itself to determine its own destiny, at the same time agitating against harmful customs and institutions of that nation in order to enable the toiling strata of the nation to emancipate themselves from them. [31]

Furthermore, in *The National Question and Leninism*, in 1929, Stalin wrote:

The Russian Marxists have long had their theory of the nation. According to this theory, a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of the common possession of four principal characteristics, namely: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up manifested in common specific features of national culture. This theory, as we know, has received general recognition in our Party. [32]

Trotskyism could not abide by the ideas of Stalin on this line. It changed one term, from "common language" to "unique language." A small difference, but an enormous one. In fact, modern Trotskyists actually criticize Trotsky himself for believing that Black people in the United States represented a Nation:

Unfortunately, however, they also adopted the false idea that there was a black nation and that Marxists should call for self-determination. This came out of a one sided interpretation of discussions with Trotsky in which he admitted that he did not fully understand the situation in the U.S. For example he asked the American comrades whether there was a separate African American language. [33]

Looking past the fact that by this logic, Ireland is part of the English nation, this chauvinism relegates the most oppressed and exploited to non-Nation status. The Black peoples whose native languages were lost through years of oppression, the the Indigenous peoples whose native languages were systematically and genocidally schooled-away were not Nations. Only Nations in the Western European sense were Nations.

In 1923, Lenin wrote a document that came to be known as "Lenin's Testament." It was meant for party eyes only but American Max Eastman, who had become infatuated with Trotsky while visiting the Soviet Union, leaked it. Trotskyists have used this "Testament" as the smoking gun to prove that Lenin wished Trotsky, not Stalin, to be his heir. They ask us to ignore the history up until then, to ignore the fact that Stalin rose to his position with the full backing of Lenin, and to ignore the fact that as Marxists we should not care in the slightest about "heirs" but only about selecting the person who represented the will of the Party. While one could argue that Stalin was not this person, we cannot in any good faith argue that it was Trotsky, given that at his height, Trotsky was only representing 1/5th [34] of the party (or 1/20, or 1/100 per Lenin [35]).

On the document, briefly, Stalin scolded Lenin's sister for letting her brother read political works because his doctors had forbidden that type of stress, which Lenin took exception to. Each of the three characters were clearly trying to do the right thing. Lenin's sister wanted to make Lenin happy, Stalin wanted to stop her from enabling Lenin's unsafe behavior, and Lenin wanted to defend his sister. Regardless, Lenin scolded Stalin for these actions quite harshly and bluntly claimed he was "too rude" to be General Secretary. One can compare this to Stalin's 20 years of struggle against Trotsky, which we can see continued well after October, to identify if "Lenin's Testament" is really so damning. In Lenin's words, which are anything but damning:

Postscript: Stalin is too rude, and this fault, entirely supportable in relations among us Communists, becomes insupportable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority—namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc. [36]

In what was likely Lenin's final piece of philosophy, *Better, Fewer, but Better* in 1924, Lenin wrote how imperialism had made the theory of Permanent Revolution irrelevant. "Shall we be able to hold on with our small and very small peasant production...until the west-European capitalist countries consummate their development towards socialism? But they are consummating it not as we formerly expected." Lenin stated that they should not expect the industrial countries of Europe to "save" the anti-Revolutionary Bolsheviks and peasants while they merely clung to power, because imperialism changed the course of revolution in the industrial countries. "They are not consummating it (the revolution) through the gradual 'maturing' of socialism but through exploitation of some countries by others." Due to imperialism, the revolutionary potential was decreased in proletarianized countries but, "precisely as a result of the first imperialist war, the East has been definitely drawn into the revolutionary movement." [37]

The victims of imperialism, largely peasant colonies, according to Lenin, had revolutionary potential. Perhaps more than those in the imperial core. This has been proven true historically, of course, but it disproves even theoretically that Russia, due to its high peasant population, did not need "saving" by the German Proletariat. It also demonstrates that Lenin's anti-permanent Revolution persisted until his death.

Post-Lenin

Many Marxist-Leninists point to *Foundations of Leninism*, a 1924 set of speeches delivered by Stalin at Sverdlov University, as the concrete birth of Leninism. This is a metaphysical mistake. How can an entire revolutionary science be created in one stroke? *Foundations of Leninism*, rather, formalizes the experiences of the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, throughout their entire existence. No, Stalin did not "formulate" Leninism here. Instead, this was a compilation and explanation of the Leninism that already existed. Stalin faithfully summarized and explained Marxism-Leninism at this time; however, as we have seen, Leninism had existed since at least 1910. This contrainterpretation of history allows Trotskyists to call themselves "Bolshevik-Leninists," as if they are a different interpretation of Leninism. This is, as we've seen, blatantly false.

After Lenin's death, perhaps Trotsky was emboldened in his struggles against the Party. Continuing his path of individualism, perhaps Trotsky believed that the Bolsheviks followed Lenin dogmatically, that a sufficiently charismatic figure could steer them in a new direction. But that was not the case. The Party continued on after Lenin's death, still following Leninism. At the Thirteenth Party Congress, all delegates, including Trotsky, voted that Stalin should remain General Secretary. [38] Trotsky, however, continued the practice of Factionalism and continued to exalt the Permanent Revolution theory. Would the new, leaderless Bolsheviks swoon? Let us see.

A large portion of the history I explore here comes from *The Errors of Trotskyism*, which was a Party statement against Trotsky published in 1925. The name may lead one to believe that these polemics were witch-hunts, attempting to invent reasons to paint the rival Trotsky as anti-Bolshevik. However, we should investigate them objectively. I have refrained from utilizing the arguments based on quotations from "dubious" sources, or those that Trotskyists claim are false. As we will see, the arguments are equally damning if we only quote those words that are certain. As we will also see, together these articles criticize Trotsky for doing the exact same things Lenin criticized him for: factionalism and chauvinism. Indeed these articles show concretely that the post-1925 Leninism (i.e. "Stalinism") is the same Leninism that existed before Lenin's death. The newest source of controversy, which sparked *The Errors of Trotskyism* was Trotsky's new book, *The Lessons of October*.

In 1924's *The Lessons of October*, Trotsky attempts to synthesize the experiences of the Bolshevik Revolution for study. In doing so, he committed the same primary mistake, factionalism, that he committed prior to the October Revolution in his "centrism" and after the revolution in his stance on the trade unions. He wrote:

"Because of the war, the peasantry was organized and armed in an army of many millions. Before the proletariat succeeded in organizing itself under its own banner and taking the leadership of the rural masses, the petty-bourgeois revolutionists found a natural support in the peasant army, which was rebelling against the war. By the ponderous weight of this multi-millioned army upon which, after all, everything directly depended, the petty-bourgeois revolutionists brought pressure to bear on the workers and carried them along in the first period." [39]

Here we can see that in 1924, years after the Bolsheviks seized power on the "Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry," Trotsky still upheld his chauvinistic Permanent Revolution. This piece, by the "Bolshevik-Leninist" Trotsky, is a perfect continuation of his theory from 1905. Whether or not these opinions were correct, or were meant to be as damning as they appear, they were against the Party line. The Party did not support these conclusions and yet Trotsky advertised them to the Party. In this, Trotsky repeated his factionalism to repeat his Permanent Revolution theory, which links 1905 Trotskyism to 1924 Trotskyism and demonstrates that Trotskyism never "died" when he joined the Bolsheviks.

In the Errors of Trotskyism, Kamenev, Stalin, Krupskaya, Zinoviev, and the Party more generally make criticisms against Trotsky, to which Trotsky responded [40]. First, Kamenev's essay Leninism or Trotskyism discusses the Lessons of October:

"Comrade Trotsky is an excellent writer, and his gifted pen has done for the Party much valuable service. But here it serves interests hostile to the Party, here it does not serve Bolshevism, but the cause of those seeking to disintegrate and discredit Bolshevism—both the Bolshevism embodying the ideology of the proletarian revolution and the Bolshevism organizing the fighting force of the proletariat." [41]

However much good Trotsky did for the party, Kamenev did not believe that Trotskyism was loyal to Bolshevism or Leninism. Later, Kamenev wrote:

"To Lenin, Trotsky was the wordy embodiment of an element hostile to the proletariat, an element showing talent at times, again simply the embodiment of certain social phenomena. This systematic struggle against Trotskyism as an anti-Bolshevist current is to be found in every volume of Lenin's works up to the time when Trotsky joined our Party. At this point there is an interruption, followed by the resumption of this struggle—in another form." [42]

Why did Lenin, according to Kamenev, believe that Trotsky was the embodiment of anti-Bolshevism before October? For the same reason he was after October, factionalism and Permanent Revolution. Kamenev elaborated on Permanent Revolution:

"The standpoint held by Lenin and by the Bolshevik Party on the character of the revolution, as developed between 1904 and the spring of 1917, had not only been wrong, but even counter-revolutionary with respect to the socialist revolution. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were thus obliged to 'change their equipment' in the spring of 1917, before the conquest of power, for the purpose of accomplishing the conquest of power. That is, they

found themselves obliged to substitute the counter-revolutionary equipment of Bolshevism by the really revolutionary equipment which Trotsky had kept ready on hand for twelve years. It is Trotsky's conviction that Lenin came over to Trotsky after first building up the Party for fifteen years on 'anti-revolutionary' ideas [...] The theory of permanent revolution is based upon a complete underestimation of the role played by the peasantry; it replies to one question only: it tells us how power cannot be seized or maintained under these conditions. Absolutely irreconcilable differences [...] It must be perfectly clear to every conscious member of the Party that for us, the Bolsheviks, and for the international proletariat marching forward to victory. Leninism is sufficient, and that it is not necessary to substitute or improve Leninism by Trotskyism. [43]

Stalin, in Trotskyism or Leninism echoed this conclusion. The only reason one would continue making factional pronouncements and continue to put forth the unpopular Permanent Revolution theory is if they were attempting to take advantage of a perceived "power vacuum" after Lenin's death. Stalin wrote here that, "Bolshevism and Leninism are one. They are two names for the same thing. Hence, the theory of the division of Leninism into two parts is a theory intended to destroy Leninism, to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism." [44]

In this piece, Stalin provided minutes on the Party meetings during the lead-up to October, in order to refute Trotsky's claims in Lessons of October that he had a uniquely important role in the revolution. Nevertheless Stalin wrote:

"Trotsky fought well in the period of October. Yes, that is true, Trotsky did, indeed fight well in October; but Trotsky was not the only one who fought well in the period of October. Even people like the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who then stood side by side with the Bolsheviks, also fought well." [45]

Stalin went on to explain that Trotsky's Lessons of October presented at least two historical falsehoods. First, that there was significant disagreement within the party concerning the revolution and second, that Trotsky played a role that could be compared with Lenin. He wrote:

"The new Trotskyism is a mere repetition of the old Trotskyism: Its feathers have been plucked and it is rather bedraggled; it is incomparably milder in spirit and more moderate in form than the old Trotskyism; but in essence, it undoubtedly retains all the specific features of the old Trotskyism [referring to Permanent Revolution, distrust of party leadership, and factionalism]. The new Trotskyism does not dare to come out as a militant force against Leninism; it prefers to operate under the common flag of Leninism, under the slogan of interpreting, improving Leninism. That is because it is weak. It cannot be regarded as an accident that the appearance of the new Trotskyism coincided with Lenin's departure. In Lenin's lifetime it would not have dared to take this risky step." [46]

Krupskaya wrote much less derisively of Trotsky (this would change later), painting a mostly positive picture. She also appeared to be more forgiving of Trotsky's attempts to continue conversations on settled matters, but made the statement:

"We must continue to work determinedly for their fulfillment. And here it would be dangerous and disastrous to deviate from the historically tested path of Leninism. And when such a comrade as Trotsky treads, even unconsciously, the path of revision of Leninism, then the Party must make a pronouncement." [47]

Perhaps Krupskaya believed that Trotsky was trying to be a good Bolshevik, but due to his years as a quasi-Menshevik, he was bound to struggle against his own individualism and bound to "unconsciously" tread back towards Trotskyism.

Zinoviev, in 1925's *Bolshevism or Trotskyism*, summarized much of the history present in this article, and demonstrated that Trotskyism and Leninism evolved separately, having no common "road."

"Comrade Trotsky has overlooked one trifle: that our Party is so Leninist and so mature that it is capable of distinguishing Leninism from Trotskyism [...] Nobody will succeed in convincing the Party that we now need some sort of synthesis of Leninism and Trotskyism. Trotskyism is as fit to be a constituent part of Leninism as a spoonful of tar can be a constituent part of a vat of honey." [48]

Given an opportunity to respond to these statements, Trotsky wrote a letter in 1925. In this letter, he suggests that Trotskyism had existed, he had been Anti-Bolshevik, but he "came to Bolshevism" in 1917:

"However, under no circumstances can I admit the charge that I am advocating a special policy ('Trotskyism') and that I am striving to revise Leninism. The conviction that is ascribed to me, to the effect that, not I came to Bolshevism, but Bolshevism came to me, is simply monstrous. In my introduction to 'Lessons of October,' I frankly stated (p. 62), that Bolshevism prepared for its role in the revolution by its irreconcilable struggle, not only against the Narodniki and the Mensheviks, but against the 'reconcilers,' i.e., to the tendency to which I belonged. Never at any time during the past eight years has it entered my head to regard any question from the point of view of 'Trotskyism' which I have considered and consider now to have been politically liquidated long ago. [49]

Thus, according to Trotsky, Trotskyism had been "liquidated" alongside Permanent Revolution. Let us remember that in Russian writing, liquidated means what to us may be defined as dissolved, extinguished, etc. He writes that Bolshevism did not go to him, but he went to Bolshevism. This means that he is arguing that the party of Lenin and the Bolsheviks did not take up any components of Trotskyism, instead Trotsky abandoned Trotskyism and came to uphold Leninism. Trotskyism had been liquidated; Permanent Revolution had been liquidated. However, both re-emerged later. In that case, how can we think that Trotskyism was actually liquidated? Why does its resurrection as "Bolshevik-Leninism" have no features of the Bolsheviks or Lenin and every feature of the "liquidated" Trotskyism? Perhaps the rumors of its death had been exaggerated.

In 1934, the close comrade to Stalin Sergei Kirov was murdered. The investigation into this crime concluded that Trotsky had surpassed simple opposition towards illegal conspiracy to overthrow the government. On this, Krupskaya wrote in 1936:

"And it is not a coincidence, that Trotsky, who never understood the essence of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the role of the masses in building socialism, thinking that it can be built merely by an order from above, is now standing on the path of organizing terrorist acts against Stalin, Voroshilov and other members of the Politburo, who are helping the masses to build socialism. It is not a matter of chance, therefore, that the unprincipled bloc of Kamenev and Zinoviev together with Trotsky have pushed them from one step to another into a deep abyss of an unheard betrayal of Lenin's work, the work of the masses, the ideals of Socialism. Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and their entire band of killers acted together with the German fascists, entered into a pact with the Gestapo [...] the Trotsky-Zinoviev gang of killers is raising its shield in attempting to wreck the people's front [...] The Second International wishes to justify and defend the capitalist system, to blindfold the eyes of the working masses. That is why they are defending the Gestapo agent—Trotsky. It has not worked out." [50]

To say nothing of the possible guilt of the Trotskyists in the assassination of Sergei Kirov, Trotsky, by 1934, actively wrote against the Party, "To overthrow Hitler it is necessary to finish with the Comintern [...] Workers, learn to despise this bureaucratic rabble!" [51]

Now let us take a break here. Trotsky bluntly stated here that in order to defeat Hitler it would be necessary to overthrow the Comintern. To save the USSR the USSR must be overthrown and replaced with something new. One can, after reading all of the preceding, assume what that something new would be.

Over the course of these years, Trotsky and the Trotskyists were purged from the Party and Trotsky was exiled from the Soviet Union. He would later be assassinated after his continued organization for counter-Revolution. Purges were indeed not invented by Stalin; they were not a new feature. "The Bolshevik Party, under Lenin's leadership, was ready to amputate this small fragment from its body, and this it did in order to remain a homogeneous Bolshevik Party [...] Either expulsion or submission to the decisions of the Bolshevik leadership." [52]

Because Trotsky represented a significant minority however, alongside the fact that American "Marxist" chauvinists needed a reason to discount the Russian Revolution as "real socialism" to suit their own racist and dogmatic understanding of capitalism and imperialism, and alongside the fact that the American Right sought a tool to funnel people away from the path of Leninism, towards something—anything—that would pose less of a threat to them, these purges have been scandalized and propagandized. There is not enough space here to provide a sufficient history of this time period, and the reader should do a thorough and objective study on the matter, being careful to avoid anticommunist and bourgeois sources on the matter. Instead, we will fast-forward slightly to 1937 and Stalin's *Mastering Bolshevism*. He described here the evolution of the struggle against Trotskyism, which was suggested to continue in the form of factionalism versus centralism:

"The Trotskyites, by themselves, were never a big force in our Party. Call to mind the last discussion on Trotskyism in our Party in 1927. This was a genuine Party referendum. Out of 854,000 Party members, 730,000 members voted at that time. Among them, 724,000 Party members voted for the Bolsheviks, for the Central Committee of the Party, against the Trotskyites, and 4,000 Party members, or about one-half of one per cent, voted for the Trotskyites, while 2,600 members of the Party refrained from voting." [53]

After the expulsion, and after Trotsky's exile and subsequent move to Mexico, Stalin argued that Trotskyism had finally undergone the change that had supposedly been made in 1917. However, according to Stalin, Trotskyism had ceased to be a political trend:

"In carrying on a struggle against the Trotskyite agents, our Party comrades did not notice, they overlooked the fact, that present day Trotskyism is no longer what it was, let us say, seven or eight years ago; that Trotskyism and the Trotskyites have passed through a serious evolution in this period which has utterly changed the face of Trotskyism; that in view of this the struggle against Trotskyism and the method of struggle against it must also be utterly changed. Our Party comrades did not notice that Trotskyism has ceased to be a political trend in the working class, that it has changed from the political trend in the working class which it was seven or eight years ago, into a frantic and unprincipled gang of wreckers, diversionists, spies and murderers acting on the instructions of the intelligence services of foreign states." [54]

This marked a relatively huge change in the struggle between Leninism and Trotskyism. Stalin here argued that Trotskyism as an ideology had indeed been liquidated, that there was no principled Trotskyist in the world, only people who used the guise of a socialist movement to work for imperialist and fascist running dogs.

These conclusions, however correct or incorrect, were supported by others. Ho Chi Minh wrote that, "The Chinese Trotskyists (like the Trotskyists of other countries) do not represent a political group, much less a political party. They are nothing but a band of evil-doers, the running dogs of Japanese fascism (and of international fascism)." [55]

Similarly, in the same year, Mao wrote that, "Trotskyist agents are being sent to the Border Regions where they systematically apply all methods in their sabotage work against the cooperation of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party." [56]

Were these problems real? Or just an effort to appease Stalin? What did Trotsky have to do with the Chinese Revolution? In fact, a great deal, Trotsky's chauvinism and factionalism had penetrated this realm of conversation in the 1920s when Trotsky was still in the party. Trotsky, now emboldened by the death of Lenin and vying for power, went so far as to argue that the Party line was simply the personal line of Stalin. Stalin was now the factionalist:

"The theses of Comrade Stalin are published in the name of the Central Committee. This does not change the fact that the theses were not examined by the plenum of the Central Committee [...] it is quite clear that such a 'simplified' method of deciding questions of

world importance, after the mistakes made and the heavy defeats, in no way serves the interests of the party and of the Chinese revolution." [57]

While nobody has ever suggested that the words written by Lenin's hand as "The Party" were ever only his personal theses, when Stalin wrote for the Party it did not represent the Party. However, if Stalin was a factionalist, his faction was still the majority, the Bolsheviks, "plenum approved the Political Bureau's policy on international affairs and emphatically rejected the anti-Party platform of the Trotsky-Zinoviev opposition." [58]

During this time, the Chinese Communist party had already established itself and was struggling against the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT). The Party listened to Chinese Comrade's interpretations, and adopted a resolution in line with the Chinese conditions. [59] These included an understanding that revolution in China was inherently different from the USSR's for several reasons. The semi-colonial status of China, remaining feudalism, the peasant proletariat alliance, the weakness of the national bourgeoisie, as well as the existence of the USSR all made the situation of China unique. The Party agreed with China to struggle alongside the peasantry against the KMT. However, still believing in Permanent Revolution and still striving towards factionalism in the party, Trotsky disagreed with a United Front, the official party position:

"Moreover, the theses of comrade Stalin are erroneous to such a point, they turn the matter upside down to such a degree, they are so permeated with the spirit of chvostism, they are so inclined to perpetuate the mistakes already made, that to remain silent about them would be a positive crime." [60]

Perhaps we should remind ourselves what Lenin said when Trotsky continued to push discussion on settled matters and promote his personal agenda: "Less than a month has passed since Trotsky started this, 'broad discussion,' on December 25. And you will be hard pressed to find one responsible party worker in a hundred who is not fed up with discussion and has not realized it's futility." [61]

Thus, over the few years after Lenin's death, Trotsky's factionalism became more and more open. His polemics became, more and more, simple opposition to the party. Stalin, in *Mastering Bolshevism*, also discussed how problems of the Bolsheviks if not corrected would create more Trotskyists, "it is because the incorrect policy of some of our comrades on the question of expulsion from the Party and reinstatement of expelled people, the heartless attitude of some of our comrades toward the fate of individual Party members and individual Party workers, artificially engender a number of discontented and embittered people, and thus create these reserves for the Trotskyites." [62] Stalin, to a greater extent than many in the Party, appeared to advise restraint in expelling people with the wrong idea, believing too heavy a hand could lead to more people turning to the Trotskyist opposition.

Post-Everyone

We saw in the previous section that in the late 1930s, Stalin and others had suggested that Trotskyism had ceased to be a political trend. That the Trotskyists had become a mere band of criminals serving the aims of fascism and imperialism. The extent that this was true is impossible

to quantify, however, if it did really happen, it was undone later. Long after Khrushchev's controversial "Secret Speech," which denounced and criminalized Stalin, the Party was once again aiming to study Trotskyism, and in 1974 Aleksandr Ivanovich Sobolev came to a conclusion that opposed Stalin's 1938 conclusion, and a conclusion that is in concert with this article's own:

"In fact, in its social origins, methodology and, above all, its political orientation and role in the workers' movement modern Trotskyism is a continuation of the theory, tactics and policies of traditional Trotskyism. Today's Trotskyists are the ideological heirs of Trotsky. The changes that have taken place in the policies and tactics of the modern Trotskyists are merely attempts to adapt Trotsky's ideas to new circumstances in order to achieve the aims that Trotsky once set himself. It follows that there is no such thing as a 'new stage' in the evolution of Trotskyism." [63]

According to Sobolev here, Trotskyism was not "liquidated" in 1917, nor was it in the 1930s; in fact, it continued on from roughly 1905 until modern times. History seems to support this conclusion. While it cannot be entirely proven whether liquidation occurred in 1917 or in the 1930s, it is clear that the reborn neo-Trotskyism is indeed the same in its major deformations as the original Trotskyism. Perhaps Stalin's conclusions were also partially true. Perhaps it is true that, while Trotskyist rank and file members were misled but earnest, that the top levels of Trotskyism were reactionaries, aiming to derail the movement and push proto-Leninists towards Trotskyism. Perhaps, even, those top levels were misled but earnest, and the subtle maneuvering by the bourgeoisie, stomping out Leninists while letting the Trotskyists sell their papers was towards the same aim:

"The monopoly bourgeoisie has made use of the revolutionary phrases of Left-wing extremists in order to divert the revolutionary potential of the working people onto a false track. By simply juggling with revolutionary phrases and slogans, the leaders of these groupings hardly pose any threat at all to the fundamentals of the capitalist mode of production." [64]

A year later, various comrades from the Novosti Press Agency wrote in Lenin Versus Trotsky and His Followers, that especially in imperialist countries, Trotskyists attempt to "divert from the correct path [...] the students and the intelligentsia." They also noted that, while the Trotskyists called themselves "neo-Trotskyists" that it indeed still did not differ from the old Trotskyism. [65] Next they arrived at the central thesis of this article:

"They describe Trotsky as Lenin's supporter and a loyal and in fact the only follower to continue Lenin's cause. The Trotskyists obviously think they can get away with such gross deception because many who take part in the working class and national liberation movement, and in particular many young people, do not know the history of the ideological and political struggle in the course of which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union."

Our conclusions here mirror those of Sobolev and the Comrades at Novoti Press. As we can see, Trotskyism and Leninism evolved as separate organisms do in the same environment, sharing some features and not sharing others. Despite this, Trotskyists attempt to mislead the workers.

They are very successful at this aim—turning workers from Leninism to Trotskyism, robbing them of their historical understanding and revolutionary spirit, and working, knowingly or not, for capitalism and imperialism. To the uneducated, they propose that Trotskyism is simply the faithful continuation of Leninism. We have shown that this is wholly false. To the semi-educated, they propose that Trotskyism was "liquidated" in 1917, and re-emerged in name only as the faithful continuation of Leninism with minor improvements made by Trotsky. We have shown that this is also wholly false.

Modern Times

Trotskyism has grown and matured since its origins around 1905, but it has not qualitatively changed since the historical periods outlined above. Therefore, Trotskyism suffers from the same general deformations in 2021 that it did in 1905: the individualistic problems of Trotskyism are the evolution of Trotsky's splitting tactics. The Western chauvinism of modern Trotskyism is the evolution of the chauvinistic and anti-Peasant Permanent Revolution. Together, individualism and chauvinism represent why the Trotskyist movement has achieved relatively little success.

While Trotskyism has had a positive impact on those in Latin America who are resisting imperialism and attempting to build socialism valiantly, the chauvinistic nature of Trotskyism prevents it from acknowledging this or acknowledging that Hugo Chávez was influenced by Trotskyism. [66] While Trotskyism has had an impact there, it has had relatively little impact elsewhere. Currently, a Trotskyist is elected to the Seattle City Council, and is by all regards a better friend to the workers of that city than the bourgeois politicians are, but that is not enough to demonstrate revolutionary success from the past 100+ years of Trotskyism. No, Trotskyism is not a very effective ideology in bringing about socialism.

Nevertheless, Trotskyism is supremely effective as foil against Leninism and true class consciousness. By hijacking the enthusiasm of new socialists, Trotskyism serves the ultimate goals of capitalism and imperialism. While individual Trotskyists may be wonderful people and organizers, this does not mean that the sum of Trotskyism is positive.

Considering ongoing anti-discipline and factionalism, Trotskyists argue against "Stalinist Bureaucracy" the same way that Trotsky said that Lenin, "wants at all costs to disrupt or shelve discussion of the matter." [67] Why? The root cause is a willfully incorrect understanding of Democratic Centralism. When the collective decision is made, it is binding, and all must strive to realize it. Centralism and "Iron Discipline" are often hard to swallow for western leftists. We Americans are sore losers. This cannot be the case in the Party. We must be—and act as—collectivists. Our actions must be subordinate to the will of the collective. Many American organizations, anarchist tendencies or democratic socialist tendencies outright ban Centralism. The Trotskyists dare not go this far. They adhere to Centralism, but not "bureaucratic Centralism." What this means in theory is unknown. What this means in practice is an easy excuse to abandon Centralism when your line has lost. Certainly they are in this way the true heirs of Trotsky himself. Trotskyist parties have also been observed to permit factions. Lenin and Stalin were both against factions, because of the fact that factions acted as parties within parties. Conversely, the Trotskyist ideal is that an honest and open faction is necessary in order to make

sure that the minority do not get squashed by the majority. That is attractive to individualists. It is not, however, in line with Centralism.

Read this passage from Socialist Alternative, a Trotskyist Organization:

"It is quite obvious that you cannot have rigid centralism in any organization today. Maybe we will have to alter the terminology, perhaps we cannot use the phrase itself because of its connections now with Stalinism. But though we have to carefully examine terminology and change it where necessary, nevertheless the idea of a unified International, of revolutionary unity, is an idea we must defend, as we must also defend and develop the idea of the need to create parties to ensure the victory of the working class." [68]

Of course, individualism is the antonym of what Ho Chi Minh called "Revolutionary Morality" and the antonym of collectivist ideology. [69] And of course, collectivism means putting the needs and wills of the collective above one's own personal ambitions:

"The essence of Trotskyism consists, lastly, in the denial of the necessity of iron discipline in the Party, in the recognition of the freedom of factional groupings in the Party, in the recognition of the necessity of constituting a Trotskyist party. For Trotskyism, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union must be not a united and single militant Party, but a collection of groups and factions, each with its own central organization, press and so forth. And what does this mean? It means that following the freedom of political groupings in the Party must come the freedom of political parties in the country, i.e., bourgeois democracy. Consequently, we have here the recognition of the freedom of factional groupings in the Party, leading directly to the toleration of political parties in the country of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and all covered up with phrases about 'internal Party democracy' and 'improving the regime' within the Party. [70]

Chauvinism and the National Question

"All Communist parties should render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and underprivileged nations [...] and in the colonies." [71]

Leninists believe in the unconditional right of self-determination for oppressed Nationalities and that we must do whatever possible to render aid to those victims of Imperialism and Colonialism. What do modern Leninist parties say about the Black Nation? Who are their opinions derived from? In fact, modern Leninist parties derive their stance from the work and theory of Black revolutionaries, people like Harry Haywood. Read from the Party for Socialism and Liberation:

"What became known as the 'Black Belt' thesis has its roots in the conception of Black Americans initially conceived by Haywood and other communists of various nationalities in the Communist International [...] Basing itself on the conceptions developed by Lenin and grounded in the Soviet experience with oppressed nations, this theory held Blacks in America made up not simply a racial or ethnic group, but comprised an oppressed nation. The thesis was adopted at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International—under Stalin's leadership—in 1928." [72]

We can see the CPUSA's stance, as well as a slight explanation of their evolution over time as well. [73]

The Trotskyists must agree with this notion, as a dialectical and materialist analysis can find no other conclusion, right? Leninists support the unconditional right to self-determination of oppressed nationalities, but Trotskyists cannot help but refute this point in the case of the Black nation:

Unfortunately, however, they also adopted the false idea that there was a black nation and that Marxists should call for self-determination. This came out of a one sided interpretation of discussions with Trotsky in which he admitted that he did not fully understand the situation in the U.S. For example he asked the American comrades whether there was a separate African American language. [74]

The Trotskyists do not believe that Black communities in America represent a Nation or that we should call for their right to self-determination. As we'll see in this section, Trotskyists are often bemused by the Black liberation struggle's friendliness towards Leninism, as if it were only so obvious that they should be more attracted to Trotskyism. It is interesting to note here that Trotsky himself believed in the Black nation until he learned that they did not have a separate language and spoke English. One may think that such a revolutionary materialist as him should have known the basic situation before forming an opinion, but we can suppose that Trotskyism also rejects the Leninist idea of, "No investigation, no right to speak." [75]

Do these Trotskyists base their line on the work of Harry Haywood? No, he was a Stalinist. What about leaders of hyper-oppressed peoples like Mao or Ho Chi Minh? No, they were Stalinists. Do they look to Lenin, who believed in the unconditional right to self-determination and that Black Americans were indeed a nation? No. Only to Trotsky, Trotsky who did not know that Black people spoke English. What does it mean when Trotskyist parties look to Trotsky, not Black revolutionaries, but Trotsky, for answers to this question?

Chauvinism in Daily Struggle

"Unfortunately, despite his reading of some Trotsky, by the time of his premature death, at the age of 39, he had not been able to draw all the necessary conclusions to develop a coherent and rounded out alternative." [76]

Trotskyism's chauvinism is clear to see at every level, and its chauvinism is much the same as Trotsky's own. While Trotsky dismissed the Revolutionary potential of the Peasantry, Trotskyists currently dismiss the Revolutionary potential of the oppressed nations of the world. Trotskyists therefore refute every successful revolution in the global south as a "deformed" workers' state infected with "Stalinist bureaucracy." We can look to any continent and see the same.

Concerning Latin America, Trotskyism has taken an interesting form: Not the Trotskyism of the imperial core, not useless and chauvinistic, but a revolutionary movement. This has led most famously to Chávismo. Hugo Chávez explained, "I am a Trotskyist...well, what is the problem? I am also a Trotskyist! I follow Trotsky's line, that of permanent revolution." [77] Is this surprising

or unforgivable? Is the slogan of spreading revolution to the whole of Latin America, so that it can stand up to the imperialists one that we Leninists reject? Of course not. This does not stop western Trotskyists from rejecting Chávez and Chávismo.

Proletarian Revolution, a seemingly defunct Trotskyist magazine and arm of the League for the Revolutionary Party. Condemned Chávez in 2007. "Chávez has explicitly opposed the Marxist principle that an actual revolution, an overturn in relations of production, is necessary to achieve socialism." [78] Chávez famously orchestrated a failed coup, which landed him in prison. When the option arose to be elected in a bourgeois parliament, Chávez took it. Is this likely to result in a true dictatorship of the proletariat? Perhaps not. Should we defend a society struggling through bourgeois democracy against American imperialism? Obviously.

An interesting literary feat is accomplished in this article. The author suggests that Chávez is no revolutionary: "it is necessary to explain that Chávez, even though he calls himself revolutionary and socialist, is heading a capitalist government." And that because he is no revolutionary, he is no Trotskyist. "The Marxist tradition defines as centrist those left-wing groups who waver between revolutionary rhetoric and reformist deeds. This centrist phenomenon has been widespread among what passes for Trotskyism for a long time." Indeed, Chávez was not a Trotskyist; he was influenced by Stalinism: "The theory violated Trotsky's belief that Stalinism had become irrevocably counterrevolutionary. It was no accident that the same 'Trotskyist' milieu that adopted this view also capitulated to equally counterrevolutionary reformists and bourgeois nationalists elsewhere."

Do you see what they did there? Chávez was not a Trotskyist because he was not a revolutionary. He was secretly a Stalinist because he was a reformist. However, both "Stalinists" and Chávez have undertaken revolutionary struggles, which no Trotskyist, especially once they cast Chávez out of their club, has ever done.

After Chávez's death, in 2013, the Socialist Party of the UK wrote, "The urgent task now, more than ever, is to fight for the conscious, independent self-organization of the working class, the peasants and the poor. We must expose the bureaucratic, reformist contradictions of Chávismo, defeat the right wing and demand and fight for a revolutionary, democratic, socialist program." Indeed, they reject Venezuela's anti-imperialist struggles altogether, "We cannot fall into the 'democratic' bourgeois logic of the government, of defending the "sovereignty of the Fatherland." [79]

Proletarian Revolution published, in 2004, *The Working-Class Way Forward: U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!* Surely, anti-imperialist sloganeering can only be accompanied by critical support for their leaders. Surely, under the section header, "Defend Venezuela!," they would not write:

"Therefore we fight for massive working-class adherence to the struggle against the impending coup, but advocate an independently class-organized force. We strive above all to aid the development of a revolutionary working class party in Venezuela, part of a re-created Fourth International. It must warn the workers not to politically trust Chávez and the minority coterie of pro-bourgeois and military reformers that he represents." [80]

Surely, they would not aim to slander Chávez, the most successful "Trotskyist" in history, in the same article: "Our political opposition to Chávez is based on the fact that he is already a barrier to the revolutionary unity of the masses. He is a petty-bourgeois nationalist who wishes to complete a capitalist nation-building project; this brings him into tactical but not fundamental conflict with imperialism." [81] Surely, they would not attack him for refusing to (suicidally) seize the property of American bomber backed imperialists: "He has not attacked imperialist-capitalist property rights in Venezuela." [82]

Perhaps these chauvinists of the 2000s have been rooted out, and internationalism and a firm stance against imperialism has won. In 2017, Socialist Alternative wrote: "At the same time, it is necessary to oppose the policies, programs and methods of the Maduro government." [83]

Perhaps our hopes are misplaced. Again in 2019: "The experience of recent years shows that we cannot have the slightest confidence in the Maduro government, the bureaucracy or the senior army officers if we want to prevent the victory of the reaction." [84] When David fights Goliath, it is best to oppose both of them.

How is this internationalism? How does trying to convince American socialists not that Cuba and Venezuela should be struggled against, not for, help the oppressed people of Honduras? Colombia? Or do they only serve, as in so many cases, to quiet the anti-imperialist voices on the American left. If Trotskyists are so internationalist, their infinite parties, tables, and newspapers would demonstrate it.

It is not all bad, despite the Trotskyists' railings against Bolivarian reformism and Cuban revolutionism, they have found a way to have a soft spot in their hearts for the Bolivian movement's reformism. [85] Similarly, The International Marxist Tendency has written a relatively solid piece on Cuba. [86] As Parenti once said, we should be grateful for the little things.

Concerning India, Kerala has valiantly struggled against COVID-19. Despite being elected in a bourgeois system, they have prioritized public health and have saved many lives. Our friends at Socialist Alternative admit "relatively better" management in Kerala, but they are still not safe from the progeny of "Lenin's Hammer." In shocking horror, they point out that the Communist Party of India (Marxist), being a governing body in a parliamentary system, are susceptible to "neoliberal logic." [87] Socialist Alternative suggests that the CPI(M) suffers from neoliberalism. But the World Socialist Website, with the Socialist Equity Party, says that the CPI(M) suffers from Stalinism! [88] These oxymoronic statements do not matter, however, because according to Socialist Alternative, CPI(M)'s influence was eroding by 2014. [89] Someone must run and tell the Keralans, and the CPI(M) there, who the first governing party was to win an incumbent battle in Kerala for decades in 2021. [90]

Concerning Africa—according to our Trotskyist friends—one of Africa's great heroes, Thomas Sankara, was not only "a source of inspiration and his struggle for socialism and an Africa free of neocolonialism shows that the continent is not condemned to have only corrupt presidents and agents of imperialism," but that he also did not understand how to wage revolution. The country's "numerous weaknesses" were simply too much for a man such as Sankara. [91] A man such as

Sankara! The author clearly did not mean anything so awful by this statement, however; this lack of tact is a symptom of the general oblivious chauvinism present in Trotskyist writings. Of course, for whatever reason that you may assume, Sankara misrepresented and misunderstood Marxism. I wonder if those children he vaccinated knew.

Concerning Asia, the Trotskyists in 2009 foretold of a mass conflict looming in China. The decade that culminated China's ascension? No, the 2010s would be a decade of conflict. [92] It is easy to support imperialist attacks against China while being told that China does not act in the interest of its own workers. It is not enough to refuse support for the Communist Party of China; in fact, they must salt the wound, dehumanizing both pro-Beijing and pro-imperialist forces in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta. [93] One could reasonably argue that the worst article, however, is the Fox Newsesque article on Xi Jinping and his brainwashed hordes of Chinese supporters which was published the very same day a racist mass murderer shot many Asian people in Atlanta. [94] How can they not see, after this, that their chauvinistic attacks serve only capitalism, white supremacy, and imperialism?

Is there any hope for the Trotskyists of socialism in Asia? Not in the Philippines. Their ongoing revolutionary struggle has been distorted and ruined by Stalinists. [95] Not in Nepal. Nepalese people have been confused and misled by Stalinism and Maoism. [96] If only Trotsky had built his fortress in Nepal instead of Mexico, Nepal would be a true paradise.

Concerning the Middle East, Trotskyists at the International Marxist Tendency, the International Socialist Review, and the Militant all condemn BDS (Boycott, Divest, Sanction Israel for their ongoing apartheid). [97] [98] [99] In fact, in the Militant, the Socialist Workers Party made a statement in May 2021, during a violent escalation and an expansion of the settlers, a full capitulation to settler colonialism. [100] Our Trotskyists do not believe that peaceful slogans of BDS are acceptable because there are workers in Israel. Nor do they believe that violence is acceptable, because Hamas is reactionary, Islamist, and—in the favorite term of all American imperialists—anti-Semitic. "There is no force on Earth other than the Israeli working class that can destroy Israeli imperialism. Unity between the Israeli proletariat and the Palestinian toilers and fellaheen [farmers] is the first necessity for carrying out a revolution that will end the bloodshed once and for all." [101] The only force on earth that can overthrow imperialism is the imperialists! The only thing we can do is have unity between Israeli and Palestinian workers. Until then, BDS and violence are both unacceptable. What if the Vietnamese waited for American workers to force the war machine to stop? How many more villages would have been destroyed? What if the Bolsheviks aimed no rifles at imperialists, and instead waited for help?

Concerning the United States, Trotskyists have argued that the Black Panthers could not help but be confused by Stalinism, and were incorrect in choosing not to work in unions. [102] What a theory. Fortunately, Lenin said that practice supersedes theory. If that is true, we should certainly trust the Black Panthers more than the Trotskyists. According to this article, the Black Panthers were confused by Stalinism. One wonders why such paternalism needed to be directed at this particular movement:

Given the limited experience and focus of the authors, this is understandable. But it nonetheless proved to be a fatal flaw [...] For example, there is no mention of the trade unions, which are an indispensable tool in the workers' struggle against the bosses. To be sure, many trade unions, especially in the 1960s, were far to the right and included many racists. But this does not absolve revolutionaries of the duty to fight for our ideas within these elemental organizations of the working class, and to extend them to every sector of the workers [...] Even if the BPP had grown to 1 million members, it would still be a relative drop in the bucket in a country as large as the US. The masses of workers do not understand small organizations. The vast majority will not abandon their previous political prejudices on a whim to join a small group with no real prospect of victory. [103]

The Black Panthers were being murdered by the state, but by not focusing on unions they were failing to live up to their duty and fight within unions that already included "many racists." One wonders if a mirror was nearby when the author wrote that the BPP would, at best, be a "drop in the bucket," with "no real prospect of victory." [104] We are materialists; we believe in finding truth from facts. This article suggests that the BPP were confused by Stalinism and that is why they were unsuccessful at achieving revolution. Conversely, if the BPP had internalized Trotskyism they could have been successful. Where is the evidence? Where is the Trotskyist who built a movement in the USA or anywhere else that captured more hearts than the BPP? How can a materialist make these claims?

This anti-Black chauvinism is not new, and attracted the gaze of Harry Haywood.

"While throwing around a good deal of left-sounding rhetoric, Trotsky's theories were thoroughly defeatist and class-collaborationist. For instance, in the postscript to Program for Peace, written in 1922, he contended that 'as long as the bourgeoisie remains in power in the other European countries, we shall be compelled, in our struggle against economic isolation, to strive for agreement with the capitalist world; at the same time it may be said with certainty that these agreements may at best help us to mitigate some of our economic ills, to take one or another step forward, but real progress of a socialist economy in Russia will become possible only after the victory of the proletariat in the major European countries.'" [105]

Conclusions

"The principles are not the starting-point of the investigation, but its final result; they are not applied to nature and human history, but abstracted from them, it is not nature and the realm of man which conform to these principles, but the principles are only valid in so far as they are in conformity with nature and history. That is the only materialist conception of the matter." [106]

This article has demonstrated that Trotskyism cannot be a continuation of the work of Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution. This article has also demonstrated that the primary complaints Trotskyists have of "Stalinists" are also complaints that Trotsky had of Lenin, and that Stalin's theory and practice was, in the main, a continuation of Lenin's. Regardless, phrases like "Bolshevik-Leninist" and "Stalinist" will still be used in order to mislead and confuse new

socialists in a process that serves only reaction and imperialism by keeping Marxists away from Leninism.

I do not expect this one paper to "finish" Trotskyism; however, perhaps it can be one of the final straws before the camel's back breaks. While we should aim to attract Trotskyists in our writing, we should focus our efforts on preventing, not curing, Trotskyism. By engaging with newer socialists earlier, by explaining this history very clearly, we can prevent newer socialists from becoming ossified Trotskyists. While sectarianism should not get in the way of principled tactical unity, we must continue to criticize wrong positions and self-criticize our own shortcomings. Because of this, we must continue to struggle ideologically against Trotskyism. We cannot afford to dismiss them due to their factions and splits, because that is not the purpose of Trotskyism. The purpose is to foil Leninism, and it, as we know, is very good at this purpose.

But why do we need to struggle? Without Trotskyism, without their weight behind "Neither DC nor Moscow" and "Neither DC nor Beijing," how many more people would have turned to socialism? Without their chauvinistic and simplistic anti-communist rhetoric how many more socialists would have stayed away from reformism? Without bombardment from Trotskyists over how actually existing socialism is "bad," how many would have stayed away from opportunism?

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