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PART TWO -- ALTERNATIVES

The defeat of all the revolutions that had developed in the wake of the successful Russian Revolution, the death of Lenin, and the power of United States capitalism gave European capitalism a breathing space. But this was not sufficient to stop for long world capitalism's movement to self-destruction. The Great Depression that erupted in 1928 threw the world into a shambles. With Hitler's victory in 1933, it was clear that civilization had evidently reached the end of something. The highest barbarism was being perpetrated, not in the far-out, "backward" regions of the globe, but in the heartland of technologically advanced civilized Europe. In the United States, too, the economic class, on the one hand, and the social revolution, on the other hand, was so overwhelming that competitive capitalism gave way to state intervention in the economy, which didn't stop things from falling apart in economics as in politics, and extending into thought, the final seal of bankruptcy of capitalist civilization.

On the other hand, the spontaneous outbursts of the proletariat trying to break out of the capitalist stranglehold, whether in the form of the brief Austrian resistance to Anschluss with Hitler, or in the great sit-downs leading to the creation of the CIO in the US; whether in the great strike in France which stopped indigenous fascism's first attempt to take power and the creation of a "Popular-Front Government", or in the greatest creative drama of all -- outright proletarian revolution in Spain. That it, too, soon lay crushed was due not alone to the victory of fascism, but Stalinism's stifling of that new historic form of combining politics with economics by the occupation of the factories at the same time that it kept a gold stranglehold over the Popular Front government in which all democratic forces, including Anarchists, was participating in.

The fact that none of the revolutionaries among the theoreticians, not even those who both opposed the Stalinists and had no illusions about the

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revolutionary nature of a "Popular Front Government" made a new "philosophic category", a new Universal, out of that new form of workers' power at the point of production is clear enough manifestation of the fact that the theoretic void sucked in not only capitalist ideologues but revolutionary leaders. None, and that includes both the co-leader with Lenin of the Russian Revolution, who fought Stalinism, Leon Trotsky, Mao Tse-tung who was carving out a new road to power in China, put himself squarely within the class collaborationist context of world Stalinism, had thought that the Spanish masses who occupied the factories during the very heat of the struggle against fascism had disclosed a new dialectic of liberation. None felt any need to work out a new relationship of theory to practice, of philosophy to revolution. On the contrary, with the outbreak of World War II, the green light for which was given by the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Trotsky who had spent over a decade exposing Stalin's ^{vi}betrayals of revolutions found no more "revolutionary" slogan to expound than to call for the defense of Stalin's Russia, supposedly still "a workers' state, though degenerate."

In a word, the theoretical void in the Marxist movement since the death of Lenin had not been filled, not for lack of a life and death struggle over Stalin's usurpation of the mantle of Lenin, nor for lack of statistical studies of the economy and reams of political theses. Rather, the void exists because, from Leon Trotsky down, the disputants have failed to face up, either to the movements from below, ^{cv}to the shattering truth of Lenin's wartime break with his own philosophic past. Lenin's dialectical analysis of the relationship of monopoly capitalism to the collapse of the Second International at the outbreak of the first world war has been reduced to a set of cliches, while the methodology he worked out for discerning

on the one hand, the new "lower and deeper" forces of revolution, and on the other hand, the emergent "administrative mentality", not to mention the Communist "passion for bossing" (1) within Bolchevism has been bypassed altogether.

Nationalised Property, the Plan, the Party -- these were the fetishes for which the workers of the world were asked to lay down their lives. In our epoch, now that Communist China had duly verified as "Marxist-Leninist" the designation of Russia as a state-capitalist society, state capitalism has become a veritable cliché. It was not so at the outbreak of World War II when it would have been made a decisive difference in the strategy of world revolution to have designated Russia as an integral part of the new stage of world capitalist development.

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

(1) Lenin Selected Works, Vol. VIII, p. 307

revolution. The gulf between theory and practice within theory itself re-appeared 29 years later in the distant caves of Yanan. Like a tidal wave it is threatening to engulf us today, on a world scale.

In a word, trying to hew out a new relationship of theory to practice, digging deep into the relationship between philosophy and revolution, probing into differences between Lenin and Trotsky, or within Mao on the period of actual revolution or an induced "cultural revolution" is pivotal, not for history as past, but as present. The youth of today, so totally absorbed with activity, activity, activity, that they thought they could leave theory be, or pick it up "en route", have learned one thing from the aborted near-revolution in the Paris of May, 1968; they can no more do without theory than without self-activity. The fact that so many are attracted to "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung", now that it has been both deified and reified into "the little red book" speaks volumes about the theoretic void that threatens to suck us all into it.

Stalin's death did lift an incubus from our heads. The spontaneous mass outbursts that have erupted in East Europe in the mid-1950's did impel the most original philosopher of our epoch, Jean-Paul Sartre, to attempt a unity between Marxism and Existentialism, which he now calls but an "enclave" within Marxism. Whether or not he succeeded, whether or now we must, instead, follow the movement to theory that arose from practice in East Europe, in the creation of a whole new Third World, with the new black dimension, it is necessary to relate ourselves to confront what went wrong with the revolutions that soured, the alternative paths that were taken and the "theories" that gushed up to take the place of those of Marx and Lenin. Just as it is impossible to skip the stages of economic development, so it is impossible to skip the movement of thought; the philosophy of the one intellectual who has never been in the Movement, much less a leader and revolutionary

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practitioner of the stature of a Trotsky or a Mao demands attention, nevertheless, because it is he who was the spokesman for very nearly a whole generation, the first postwar generation which attempted, at one and the same time, to be out and in the Communist Party, and out and in dialectic reason.

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Chapter IV -- Leon Trotsky as Theoretician

It was, of course, no accident that the Great Divide in Marxism caused by World War I and the collapse of the Second International sent Lenin back to Hegelian dialectics. And that, like all the other revolutionary Marxists who remained true to Internationalism, Trotsky felt no such compulsion. But it would be utterly ludicrous, the pinnacle of the absurd, to draw from the conclusion that "if only: Trotsky had reread Hegel's Logic, all would have been well; there would have been no political differences between Lenin and Trotsky, and "of course, they would have evolved the same dialectic methodology. Trotsky was not unmindful of dialectics. He took it for granted. It remained "inner", somewhere in the black of his head. This, however, was not subjectivism. (2) The objective situation had changed, yes. The fall of the Second International was a "shock", yes. But this did not seem to require "basic" changes in theory, much less in philosophic "underpinnings" from those who remained faithful to Marxism. A corollary to this seemed to be Trotsky's concept of intuition: "No great work is possible without intuition-- that is, without that subconscious sense which, although it may be developed and enriched by theoretical and practical work, must be ingrained in the very

(2) Isaac Deutscher's three-volume biography of Trotsky notwithstanding, the philosophic measure of the "Man of October" has yet to be taken. Where we do not get Stalinist slanders, well financed by the Communist states, or Trotskyist panegyrics, the objective analyses carry a subjective air -- attributed to Trotsky! One personal experience may help illuminate the lack of subjectivity on Trotsky's part. At the height of the Moscow Frame-Up Trials against himself, the bourgeois press printed "rumors" that Stalin had at no time been a revolutionary but had always been a Czarist agent ~~trypcateir~~ and was now ~~mpw~~ ~~gereju~~ wrecking revenge. "But Stalin was a revolutionary!" Trotsky explained. He insisted on adding a postscript to the article of the day which exposed the Stalinist charges against him. Here was what he dictated: "The news has been widely spread through the Tsarist days, and that he is now avenging himself upon the old enemies. I place ~~no trust~~ ~~whatsoever~~ ~~in this gossip~~. From his youth, Stalin was a revolutionist. All the facts about his life bear witness to this. To reconstruct his biography ex post facto means to ape the present Stalin, who, from a revolutionist, became the leader of the reactionary bureaucracy."

nature of the individual. Neither theoretical education nor practical routine can replace the political insight which enables one to apprehend a situation, weight it as a whole, and foresee the future. The gift takes on decisive importance at a time of abrupt changes and breaks — the conditions of revolution. The events of 1905 revealed in me, I believe, this later life." (3)

Whatever truth there is in this concept, it cannot serve as a substitute of following, step by step, the development of Trotsky's most distinctive contribution to Marxism — the theory of permanent revolution as it was tested in actual historical situations.

The Theory of Permanent Revolution

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

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

In My Life, Trotsky, who was Parvus' junior by 12 years, readily enough admitted that the analysis of Parvus "brought me closer to the problems of Social Revolution, and, for me, definitely transformed the conquest of power by the proletariat from an astronomical 'final' goal to the practical task of our day." Nevertheless, it was Trotsky's 1905, a series of articles written in 1904 through 1906, climaxed by the theses, Summaries and Prospectives, which

(3) Leon Trotsky, My Life, p. 185

came out of the actual 1905 revolution that raised the prognosis to the level of theory. It can rightly be considered original in this development. The 80-page essay on the vanguard role of the proletariat, the subordinate role of the peasantry and the interrelationship of Russia with the European Revolution became the subject of controversy with Stalin who charged Trotsky with "underestimation of the peasantry." Let us read the main theses as Trotsky himself wrote them: (4)

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

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

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

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

- (4) Though rather scattered, most of Trotsky's views on the theory of permanent revolution are available in English: (a) As first developed in the period of 1904-1907, they can read in Our Revolution by Leon Trotsky, collected and translated by M. Olgin. (b) The most important are quoted by Trotsky in context of 1917 Revolution, as Appendices both to the History of the Russian Revolution. (c) As developed in relationship to the 1925-27 Chinese Revolution, See Trotsky, Problems of the Chinese Revolution; these reappear and are updated in his Introduction to Harold Isaacs, The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution (1938 3d.) (d) The whole theory is summed up as a totality in the pamphlet, The Permanent Revolution, which includes a special Preface to the American edition (1930). (e) A new Restatement -- the final word we have from Trotsky's pen -- the unfinished biography of Stalin has an Appendix "Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution."

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

These are the main theses of the theory that became famous as the theory of the permanent revolution as they were expounded in 1905-06 and repeated over and over and over again for nearly 35 long years, that is to say throughout the rest of Trotsky's life. Theoretically, his whole life can be said to be a series of postscripts to those 1905-06 theses. It is not without significance, however, that Trotsky had never used it as a foundation for building a tendency or a group, that it nowhere entered the scene in 1917, and from the very start of the struggle with Stalin, the choice of theoretic weapon -- the theory of permanent revolution -- was Stalin's, not Trotsky's, though the latter eagerly rose to the bait.

Neither the stage of the world economy nor the economic law of combined development which made it possible for even a backward land like Russia to have some big industry and, above all, a concentrated proletariat; neither the vanguard role of the proletariat nor its need for aid from proletariat of the technologically more advanced lands ^{or} were in dispute. Not in Lenin's day. What was in dispute was the role of the masses. Since these, in the majority, were peasants, Lenin considered all talk of revolution that didn't spell out their role as "abstract", "sonorous", "empty."

Trotsky had always claimed that on the question of the peasantry and the agrarian revolution in general, he had always since the autumn of 1902 been a "pupil" of Lenin's. This became the theme, especially after Lenin's death. Whatever were Stalin's motivations for singling out the "underestimation of the peasantry" -- and they, of course, were for purposes of vanquishing

Trotsky, the truth was that Trotsky's concept of the peasantry was certainly not one of a self-developing subject. It is this that speaks a great deal louder than any Stalinist slander. It is this which is pivotal to the dialectic of revolution, not only in Russia, but in China, not only in 1905 or 1917, but in 1927 and 1937. It is this which defines "abstract revolutionism" that Lenin considered the methodological enemy after power as before, in defeat as in victory and for which he tried sketching out new points of departure for theory, should the continuation of October on a world scale emerge, "via Peking rather than via Berlin." And because this is central also to our age, we must follow, step by step, Trotsky's own views. (5)

We saw that in his 1905 concept "the rural population will obtain political organization only after the urban proletariat has taken the helm of government." In 1909, Trotsky wrote that "Kulak" criticism is the historical curse of the peasant movement ... "It was on the circumscribed political intelligence of the peasant who, while in his village plundered his landlord in order to seize his land, but then, decked out in a soldier's coat, shot down the workers that the first wave of the Russian Revolution (1905) broke." As late as 1930, he quoted this statement, not as something that had outlived itself with the revolutionary peasant participation in the 1917 Revolution, but as something that still held true.

1917 erupts not only in the cities but on the countryside. Yet, in the very same breath in which he writes that the peasants "pushed the Bolsheviks toward power with their revolt" he concludes that they had played a revolutionary role "for the last time in their history." (5)

The revolutionary role of the peasantry then repeats itself in China in 1925-27. Trotsky duly notes that the whole history of that land is one endless series of peasant revolts, but then not only refuses to grant them socialist consciousness, but even national consciousness: "Agrarian backwardness always

(5) History of the Russian Revolution (p. 407)

goes hand in hand with the absence of roads ... and the absence of national consciousness."

Trotsky disregards
1937 arrives. Japan invades China. Mao, who claims to have established
"peasant Soviets" and certainly has a Red Army, and reiterates:

"The peasantry, the largest numerically and the most atomized, backward, and oppressed class is capable of local uprisings and partisan warfare but requires the leadership of a more advanced and centralized class in order for this struggle to be elevated to an all - national level."

In introducing a work on the Chinese, 1925-1927 revolution, Harold Isaacs*, The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, Trotsky stakes out a bold claim: "The conception of the permanent revolution was confirmed once more, this time, not in the form of a victory, but of a catastrophe." In a word, no matter what the historical period, no matter which country is the topic, no matter what the world situation, Trotsky holds to his position, that, "no matter how revolutionary the role of the peasantry may be, it can, nevertheless, not be an independent role and even less a leading one."

The real division, not between Trotsky and Stalin, but between Trotsky and Lenin was the attitude to the masses, be they peasant or proletarian. Are they the makers of history, or are they, there, only "to be led", to be ordered about. Are they the forces that, even when they overthrow capitalism, must return to the role of passive masses the day after the revolution?

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

revolution would not really have completed itself.

Lenin's methodology was always that of looking at the masses -- be they proletarian, peasant or oppressed nationality -- as self-developing subject. In the dark days of World War I., as we saw, when the proletariat was slaughtering itself across national boundary lines, he saw this in the struggle of small nations for self-determination: "The Dialectics of history is such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli which held ^{the} real power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely, the socialist proletariat." (6)

In opposition to many a Bolshevik co-leader, to Lenin the success of the Russian Revolution did not mean that self-determination was no longer applicable. Stalin's "rudness" and "disloyalty" during Lenin's lifetime was to be seen precisely in his Great Russian chauvinist attitude to the national minorities, the Georgians especially. As Lenin lay dying, he entrusted the struggle against Stalin on the question of national minorities to the hands of Trotsky. But, as was characteristic of Trotsky throughout his life, he once again went in for "conciliationism" (7)

(6) Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XIX, p. 308

(7) "Conciliationism" is a word Lenin had used to describe Trotsky's position when he was outside of both the Bolshevik and Menshevik groups attempting to bring about "unity". In his My Life, Trotsky accepts the description and tries to use it to prove that what errors he committed "always referred to questions that were not fundamental or strategic, but dealt rather with such derivative matters as organizational policy." (p. 185)

He failed to unfurl the banner of struggle against Stalin at the twelfth Congress of the Russian Party as he had promised Lenin he would do.

Previously, in 1920 he did vote for Lenin's Theses on the National and Colonial Question. But again, as on the whole question of dialectics, Trotsky merely "took it for granted" without ever developing the universals of socialism anew with the newly developing objective situation. The one and only time that Trotsky gave serious consideration to the fact that the Theses established a new point of departure in theory, and that that new point was not on the basis of the theory of permanent revolution, but on the basis of the Leninist position on the National Question, was the time when he was forced to do so by the exigencies of a united caucus with Zinoviev against Stalin's fatal class-collaborationist policy in China. But then, it was Zinoviev's Thesis that he was defending. That thesis based itself directly on Lenin's position.

The nub of the question is not the authorship of any thesis but its content. Lenin felt a new departure in theory was called for because a new "Subject" had come out of life. The "Subject" -- self-determination of nations -- may have appeared old. Actually, it was within such a new world situation that it had an altogether different meaning.

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

"We must reply to this question in the negative ... we must ... give theoretical grounds for the proposition that, with the aid of the proletariat of the most advanced countries, the backward countries may pass to the Soviet, and after passing through a definite stage of development, to Communism, without passing through the capitalist stage of development."

It cannot be stressed too much that these precedent-shaking statements came from a man who had spent decades fighting the Narodniki (POPulists) of

his own country, people who had maintained that Russia could skip the capitalist stage of development. (8)

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

Only something very fundamental and objective could have wrought such a complete change in Lenin's concepts. Three world-shaking events brought about this transformation. Firstly, the 1917 Russian Revolution had established a workers' state that could come to the aid of a land even more backward technologically than Russia. Secondly, the colonial revolutions themselves illuminated the revolutionary role not only of the peasantry but also of national struggles in the imperialist epoch. Thirdly, the new dimension of color in the Orient, in Africa and in the U.S. (As a totality they concretized the "Subject").

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

This point of departure in theory -- industrialization without capitalism -- rested, of course, on the proposition that the working class of the

(8) Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. X, p. 243

advanced countries could and would come to the aid of their brothers in the technologically under-developed countries. (9)

As we see, this page of Comintern history was lost, not only by Stalin whose policy ruined the Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927, but by Trotsky. It was lost by Trotsky, not out of "subjectivism", or "misquotation". No, the reason goes much, much deeper. That is how he read Lenin. That is what he understood by the dialectics of revolution, the vanguard role of the proletariat, the "Subject". It turned out always to be "object". He didn't make a theory out of this as had Bukharin; a theory Stalin practiced. But once Lenin was not there to do the "correcting", the next step was reducing workers' state to nationalized property.

Nature of the Russian Economy

Because each generation of Marxists must restate Marxism for itself, and the proof of its Marxism lies not so much in its "originality" as in its "actuality"; that is to say, whether it met the challenge of the new times, Trotsky asserted that, no matter how great his role was in 1917, the proof of his stature would depend on his achievements after the death of Lenin. Stalin's victory over Trotsky would mean nothing if it were Trotsky's analyses which proved correct and thus laid the foundation for the continuity of world revolution. That is, of course, true and it is here where we can trace the different methodological approaches of Lenin and Trotsky. Lenin, as we saw, met the challenge of the new objective situation of monopoly capitalism and imperialism philosophically as well as "materialistically" by studying it dialectically, looking at the objective and subjective situation as a unit, a totality that contained its own opposite, from which contradiction

(9) Ibid., p. 242

the impulse to forward movement would arise. Trotsky, on the other hand, confronted with a new stage of world capitalism and the phenomenon of Stalinism -- not Stalin as a personality who was so "rude" and "disloyal" that Lenin asked for his removal, but as a political tendency which had state power, economic power, a monolithic party . So long as no new stage of economic development had arisen to suck in any of the many centrifugal tendencies within the Bolshevik party, these latter could, and did so appear to Trotsky to differ merely politically. By 1928, however, it was no longer a question of factional fights or even only of the receding revolutionary wave, both West and East. It was internal. The NEP man had grown rich and did threaten the regime. The hurry with which Stalin then adopted the state plan of industrialization was not, however, due only to conditions in Russia, much less to any conviction that Trotsky had been right all along in proposing total state planning. By the end of the first five-year plan, in 1932 it had become quite clear that the whole world of competitive capitalism had collapsed. The Depression had so undermined the foundations of "private enterprise", thrown so many millions into the unemployed army, who, in turn, threatened the very existence of capitalism, that capitalism, as it had existed up to then -- anarchic, competitive, exploitative and a failure had to give way to state planning to save itself from proletarian revolution. Whether it was in rich countries like the United States that could still, with its New Deal, maintain a mixed economy or it was Nazi Germany with its state plan and militarist Japan with its co-prosperity sphere planning, the whole world had definitely moved from "simple" monopoly stage to something new. What was it? State Capitalism?

Trotsky rejected any such designation. To him, the "property forms" (all limited by now to statification for the early production conferences had not only been abolished, but even the trade unions themselves had been incorpora-

ted in the state) (10) -- were what made Stalinist Russia inviolate as a workers state though degenerate". The feature of the bureaucracy purely limited to a "police" arrogating to himself a greater share of wealth as a result of his "distributive function." Though such concentration on distribution had been repeated by Marx as under-consumptionist, Trotsky used precisely this methodology. He continued to consider Russia a workers' state, no matter how the workers fared in this state, no matter whether the leadership was a bureaucracy with "Cain Stalin" -- his phrase -- at its head or not; whether foreign policy envisaged a Hitler pact, or otherwise; and even if the Moscow Franco trials killed off the "General Staff of the Revolution." As he lay dying, the heritage he left his cadre -- the Fourth International -- was still "Defense of the Soviet Union."

What methodology of thought led to such a conclusion? Here are his own words:

"The first concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state to occur in history was achieved by the proletariat with the method of social revolution, and not by capitalists with the method of trustification." (11)

Where Lenin had fought hard against transforming the reality of the early workers' state into an abstraction which hid the bureaucratic deformations, even then, Trotsky spent all the rest of his life transforming the Stalinist state into an abstraction which blinded him to the actual transformation into opposite. Where Lenin warned that a workers' state was a transitional state

(10) In Lenin's day, Trotsky was the one who proposed "merging" the Trade Unions into the Workers' state. See my analysis of that crucial debate in Marxism and Freedom, pp. 194-200

(11) The Revolution Betrayed, pp. 247-8

and could be transitional "either to socialism or a return backwards to capitalism". Trotsky limited any warning about a possible restoration of capitalism "on the installment plan" to the restoration of private capitalism. Neither the fact that the workers had lost all their control over production through factory conferences, nor the fact that the trade unions themselves had been incorporated into the state apparatus nor the fact that the means of production were increasing at the expense of the means of consumption exactly as under private capitalism would move him from making statified property into a fetish, nationalized property = workers' state.

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

Trotsky would speak of the possibility of a restoration of capitalist relations, but it was always something that might happen or could happen, but not as a process evolving "before our very eyes", (12) evolving in the startling

(12) Bukovsky, next to Trotsky, the most important leader in the Left opposition, had phrased it when the first wave of leaders of the Left opposition had capitulated to Stalin just as soon as he did adopt this five-year plan: "The capitulators refuse to consider what steps must be adopted in order that industrialization and collectivization do not bring about results opposite to those expected ... They leave out of consideration the main question: what changes will the Five-Year Plan bring about in the class relations in the country." (Russian Opposition Bulletin #7, 11/27.)

but not altogether unforeseen form of state capitalism. (13) The movement from monopoly to state capitalism was, moreover a world phenomenon. Trotsky denied the fact. He rejected the theory.

The struggle against Stalinism had the air of self-defense, however, not because Trotsky was subjective about his own status of leader of the Russian Revolution, but because objectively he saw nothing fundamentally new in World capitalist development. It had simply become more decadent, and in its "death agony" had emitted fascism and, though "politically" Stalin had become as evil, this had not "fundamentally" changed the economic relations in Russia; nationalized property remained intact. Nothing had changed for Trotsky since the decade of 1914-1924 -- except the leadership. Stalin was the "organizer of defeats" -- and he, Trotsky, could organize victories.

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

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

But this is not the mark of a Marxist theoretician. As theoretician, what is of importance is that the new stage of economic development, no matter what it is called, (14) is always considered in strict relationship to the subjective development, the new form of workers' revolt, or the new strata in the population that continue to oppose that stage of capitalist development, like the nations opposing imperialism. And, flowing from this relationship, the working out of a new relationship between theory and practice.

Because these factors did not dominate Trotsky's analysis, his criticism, though constant, of Stalinism, revolved mainly about bureaucratism and the adventuristic "tempo" of Stalinist industrialization. Thereby he became an actual prisoner of the Stalinist Plan. No wonder that, in the process, the very concept of socialism was reduced to the concept of

(14) The first analysis of Russia as a state-capitalist society, based on an original study of the Three Five-Year Plans as well as the political deviations, was completed in 1941, and published by me in New Internationalist, Dec. 1941, Jan. and Feb. 1942. See also the last discussion article I handed in when I left, once and for all the Trotskyist movement: "The Revolt of the Workers and the Plan of the Intellectuals, an Answer to Comrades, William F. Ward and John G. Wright." All the documents of both the state capitalist tendency and Marxist-humanism are in deposit with Wayne State University Labor Library. The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection.

(15) Boarding Conference of the Fourth International. "Imperialist War and Proletarian Revolution," pp. 15-16. Trotsky edited.

state plan. Trotsky's denials notwithstanding, the proof of this is in Trotsky's own words -- in nothing less fundamental than the Manifesto of the Fourth International on "Imperialist War and Proletarian Revolution."

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

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

"Theory of Stalin-Bukharin tears also the national revolution from international path. The present policy of the Communist International to an auxiliary corps which is not destined to solve independent tasks." (15)

In a word, even the departure from the path of world revolution, once it was not related to a transformation into opposite of the class nature of "The workers' state", inevitably got reduced to a question of leadership.

Here is how he expressed it in his Diary, 1925:

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

(15) Founding Conference of the Fourth International. "Imperialist War and Proletarian Revolution", p. 15. Emphasis added.

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

"But now my work is indispensable in the full sense of the word. There is no arrogance in this claim at all. The collapse of the two 1st Internationals has posed a problem which none of the leaders of these Internationals is at all equipped to solve. The vicissitudes of my fate has armed me with important experience in dealing with it. There is now no one except the 2nd and 3rd 1st Internationals. I need at least five years of uninterrupted work to insure the succession."

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

His weakness stemmed from his subordination of the self-developing "Subject" to his concept, nay, concentration on leadership. This led him not only to raise the question of leadership to the level of theory, but attributing this to Lenin:

"For Lenin's slogans to find their way to the masses there had to exist cadres ... the vital mainspring in this process is the party, just as the vital mainspring in the mechanics of the party is its leadership."

This was exactly what the vital mainspring of Lenin's philosophy was not. Despite, in his 1903 concept (16) of vanguard party, by 1905, Lenin declared the proletariat in advance of the party. Despite his leadership of the Bolshevik Party in 1917, he threatened "to go to the sailors" when its leaders failed to put the question of workers' power on the agenda of the day. By 1920 he proposed going to "the non-party masses." Despite the "21 conditions" to the newly formed CI, he not only declared that the Revolution

(16) For a detailed analysis of the changes in Lenin's concept of party, 1903-1923, see CH. XI "Forms of Organization; the Relationship of the Spontaneous Self-Organization of the Proletariat to the Vanguard Party." Marxism and Practice, pp. 177-193

was too intent on "speaking Russian", but ended his life's work by the most devastating critique of his own co-leaders. He will not only make clear he has no one to leave his mantle to, but states that, if the divisions in the Political Bureau signify gloss division, then nothing he says will prevent its collapse. Nothing did.

Trotsky, on the other hand, continued to speak of the "immaturity" of the proletariat: "The strategic task of the next period -- a pre-revolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization -- consists in overcoming contradictions between the maturity of objective revolutionary conditions and immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard ..."

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

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

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

workers' own instincts and demands -- all these dualities, as we saw previously, were compounded by the contradiction between the dialectics of the revolution and the specific subject who constituted the majority of "the masses" when that happened to be peasant rather than proletarian. It is time to draw the theoretic threads together as philosophy and revolution.

Just as that "fixed particular", state property, substituted for any elaboration of a new universal, regarding Russia, so the determination of what was new in China in 1937 was buried in the old category that Mao was only echoing Stalin's class-collaborationist view of a block of four classes that he expounded in 1925-27. Mao's new offer of collaboration with Chiang Kai-shek did flow from the concept of a block of four classes. But, China in 1937 was not China of 1927, not only because the Chinese Communist Party, Stalinist or otherwise, was now a mass force but, above all, because of the objective world situation created by Japan's invasion of China. For Trotsky to treat the situation in China under those circumstances as if it were only a replay of the 1925-27 disaster is not only to credit Stalin with omnipotence. It is to reveal one's own European outlook. And that is very central to the whole thesis. Trotsky's outlook was too European-centered.

This is not to say that Trotsky was not a true internationalist. He had always been a world revolutionary. He had never bowed to national egoism, Russian or European. Indeed, the question is not a geographic question at all. It is neither European nor Oriental nor, for that matter, so much a world question, as a question of what is a self-developing subject. Thus, "European-centered" is used here as a manifestation of failure to grasp a new self-developing subject that in this case turned out to be the Chinese masses, mainly peasants.

methodology of Marx who, likewise, was, of necessity, European-centered, both in where he lived, the historic period in which he lived, and the subject matter of his most serious theoretic studies, which was England in the mid-19th century. This did not, however, stop him from hailing the Taiping revolution as a possible new point of departure in world development. On the contrary, he held on to this new point of development, not only in the 1850's when it could be contrasted in the quiescent 1850's of the European proletariat, but also in the 1860's and 80's when he began to study Russia, a country he had heretofore treated both as the greatest European barbarism and semi-Oriental. Now, in his correspondence with Russian revolutionaries, he began to open altogether new possibilities of revolution in backward Russia, provided it would be supported by the European proletariat. The same attitude to the concrete unfolding of the dialectics of liberation characterized Marx's writings on the historic significance of the Oriental despotism, despotic or otherwise. In a word, the question of "understanding the dialectics" wasn't ever for Marx or Lenin merely the understanding of a philosophic category but the question of working out the actual dialectic of liberation. Every Marxist naturally aims at that, but since there is no immediate 1:1 relationship between the subjective and the objective, between philosophy and revolution. Since the test can only come in life itself, it is one actual reality in the period between Lenin's death and Trotsky's death, to which we turned in examining the relationship of political theories and philosophic concepts. If the dialysis in Trotsky, if it had nothing to do with any failure "to return" to Hegelian dialectics during the first Great Divide in Marxism, 1914, it did have everything to do with abstract revolutionism, the methodological enemy Lenin singled out when he moved from attacks on the betrayers to criticism of his ^{Bolchevik} co-leaders. Notwithstanding all the myriad of concrete activities of Trotsky, as of Lukharin, as individuals and great revolutionaries, the simple, and hard, truth is that

the theory of permanent revolution did remain "abstract".

The proof is not, and cannot be, in dialectics "as such." The proof is, and can only be, in life. And in life the theory of the permanent revolution remained at the end of his life what it was when he first conceived it, while abstract revolutionism blinded him from seeing the transformation of first workers' state into a state-capitalist society. Trotskyists may find quotations which "prove" that Trotsky "predicted" that social revolutions would begin in the East rather than in the West, or even specifically in China. The state-capitalist tendency that fought Trotsky's 1939 analysis of Russia as a degenerated workers state found a 1919 quotation of Trotsky on state-capitalism. But we are not playing factional games, and this is not a battle of quotations and of scoring debaters' points. The simple, and hard truth is that those quotations were not what defined Trotskyism. And Trotsky himself did not seek to define it in so vapid a manner. History, and Trotsky was always measuring himself against that yardstick, tells otherwise.

Theory, especially original Marxist theory, is a hard taskmaster. So inseparable is it from both reality and philosophy; so integral is it both to the objective and the subjective, that no matter how organically a revolutionary one is and no matter how abiding the intuition, and no matter how prophetic the vision -- and surely there was no more brilliant prognostication that Trotsky's 1905 projection of a proletarian revolution taking place in backward Russia ahead of anywhere in the technologically advanced countries -- can substitute for what Hegel called "the labor, the seriousness, the patience and suffering of the negative." Shorn of that, Trotsky is compelled tiresomely to repeat:

" I repeatedly returned to the development and the grounding theory of the permanent revolution.... the peasantry is utterly incapable of an independent political role."(19)

This is the very last theoretic writing we have from Trotsky's pen as World War II broke out upon a world changed by the Depression, the rise of Fascism, the sprouting of State Plans not only in the "workers' state," but in the private capitalist world of Nazism and Japanese militarism, on the one hand, and the national resistance in China to Japan's invasion.

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

Dialectics takes its own toll of theory and theoreticians.

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(19) Stalin by Trotsky, p. 425