Imperialism’s offensive against the world’s working class has sharply intensified since the credit crunch crisis began in 2008. Hand in hand with this goes the offensive against the ideology of global working class liberation, revolutionary Trotskyism. The political and ideological collapse of all the soft left groups who refuse to call for an anti-Imperialist United Front without political support with Gaddafi and who continue to back the counter-revolutionary rebels of Benghazi and demand the overthrow of Gaddafi on behalf of Imperialism is shocking. Today new ideologues and renegades join the old swamp of opportunism; Karl Kautsky finds a new champion in Lars T Lih. Max Shachtman and Raya Dunayevskaya, previously only defended by Sean Matgamna, find new adherents in Cyril Smith, The Commune, Permanent Revolution, the Movement for Socialism, etc. István Mészáros and Cliff Slaughter et al seek to trump the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky with the counter-revolutionary reformist dross of history from the likes of Kautsky. IDOT does battle with all these petty bourgeois ideologues, enemies of humanity’s communist future.

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Unity is strength, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη, L’union fait la force, Es la unidad fuerza, Η ενότητα είναι δύναμη.
Part I: The Permanent Revolution group renounces Trotskyism

In Defence of Trotskyism page 2

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
not make that history when those conditions are so adverse, they must wait and fight to prepare those favourable conditions anew. 1924 is correctly adjudged by Trotksyists as the defeat of the Russian Revolution because it was then the bureaucracy imposed the theory of socialism in one country, it was then they abandoned the world revolution and liquidated the Bolshevik party. Now the world revolution had a new opponent, a subordinate, secondary opponent subversive of world imperialism on the world stage it is true but a vital and consciously counter revolutionary opponent after 1933 within the subjectively revolutionary vanguard of the world working class. These counter-revolutionaries were prepared to go to any lengths in collaboration with imperialism to prevent the world revolution, as are their political heirs today.

The prime reason behind the tragic events of 1921 was not the misleadership of Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin but the isolation of the revolution. The Russian Revolution was not just the Russian Revolution but a constituent part of and the beginning of the world revolution. It could only have advanced with revolutionary victories in the West, in Germany in particular. Every serious Bolshevik, including Stalin, understood that at the time. What then were they to do when the Kronstadt mutiny broke out? To concede was to abandon the revolution then and there because there was the imminent danger of an invasion by the White armies across the Gulf of Finland and even if that had not happened once they had conceded privileged access to food and welfare to one section this had to be taken from another section. General confusion would quickly follow in circumstances where the bureaucracy who had to maintain the running of the state had, in general, only those privileges necessary to function, although they were beginning to appropriate more. The leadership still promoted the world revolution.

The struggle for world revolution would have ended in Russia with a massacre of the Bolsheviks within a short period. Isolated handfuls of revolutionaries would have continued the fight, of course, but they would have done so in far worse circumstances and we would have been left today in a far worse position theoretically and politically because of it.

**A terrible dilemma**

Their was a terrible dilemma but every serious revolutionary socialist since then who has understood has given their unequivocal support to Lenin and Trotsky in taking that decision on Kronstadt. Comrade Hoskisson cannot. He treats the Revolution as Russian only; he assesses it as if the Russian Revolution was the decisive moment of the world revolution. This is a reference to Trotsky’s refusal to ally with Bukharin (“the Right”) against Stalin in 1928 when “a political counter-revolution” was taking place. Leaving aside the fact that all this was supposed to have happened back in 1921 not in 1924 or 1928 capitalism is clearly seen as better than Stalinism as every ‘democrat’ must admit! Had Trotsky ceased ‘tilting at the windmill’ of capitalism in 1928 as here advocated how would he have politically fought Hitler in Germany and Franco in Spain and founded the Fourth International in 1938? It is clear that our ex-Trotskyists have repudiated the struggle against capitalism at its highest point of theory and practice; Trotskyism.

**Trotsky as Don Quixote**

But comrade Hoskisson champions the non-class, unqualified ‘democracy’ – in fact a fraudulent bourgeois parliamentary system – as a remedy to Stalinist tyranny. In perhaps the most cynical passage of the article he writes, “In one article in 1928 Trotsky refers to his erstwhile allies against Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, as a “pair of Sancho Panzas”, sadly the Don Quixote of the time, tilting at the windmill of the Right, was Trotsky himself”. The ‘Right’ is capitalist restorationism. This is a reference to Trotsky’s refusal to ally with Bukharin (“the Right”) against Stalin in 1928 when “a political counter-revolution” was taking place. Leaving aside the fact that all this was supposed to have happened back in 1921 not in 1924 or 1928 capitalism is clearly seen as better than Stalinism as every ‘democrat’ must admit! Had Trotsky ceased ‘tilting at the windmill’ of capitalism in 1928 as here advocated how would he have politically fought Hitler in Germany and Franco in Spain and founded the Fourth International in 1938? It is clear that our ex-Trotskyists have repudiated the struggle against capitalism at its highest point of theory and practice; Trotskyism.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
In Defence of Trotskyism page 5

discussion, acceptance of tendencies and fac-
tions as a normal part of the conflicts between
serious revolutionaries with developed political
critical faculties and maximum unity of action to
test out the majority will and political judg-
ments in action. Democratic centralism does not
have to be bureaucratic centralism.

Slaughter begins by declaring that the opening
sentence of Trotsky’s 1938 Transitional Pro-
grame; "The world political situation as a
whole is chiefly characterised by a historical
crisis of the leadership of the proletariat" and
again "the historical crisis of mankind is reduced
to the crisis of revolutionary leadership" was
central to their (the old WRPs) thinking (p276).
And he then goes on: "and this struggle simply
required the replacement of one leadership (the
present reformist one) with our own, the revolu-
tionary one, of course".

Of course this is a serious distortion. In the first
quote, Trotsky refers principally to the current
existing leadership of the trade unions and the
bourgeois-workers parties, and the second quote
(after "again") to the struggle for revolu-
tionary leadership against the Stalinists and
centrist groups like the SWP and the Militant/
SEPW on how to fight the existing reformist
leaders of the mass parties of the working class.
The intervening section between the two quotes
and the entire TP is dedicated to expounding on
the relationship between these two sentences.
As the whole of the TP is about how to fight this
battle we can see that the WRP practically
ceased this struggle in 1974 with the expulsion
of its substantial working class base in Oxford,
the comrades who later became the WSL. This
was the second time they had acquired a sub-
stantial working class base and bureaucratically
expelled its leadership, the first being the
Communist Party base that came with Brian Behan
and others after they joined following the 1956
crisis of the Communist Party.

The WRP’s leading trade unionists after 1984
were Dave Temple in the North East and Peter
Gibson, convenor of the London Buses Commit-
tee. Gibson, as leader of the bogus All Trades
Union Alliance, was as bureaucratic a leader as
any other group produced, scarcely better than
the Stalinists. The relationship with Ted Knight
and Ken Livingstone was as unprincipled and
opportunist as any Stalinist group operated.
They even championed the leader of the Steel-
workers union, the arch right wing bureaucrat
Gibson, as Leader of the bogus All Trades
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The decisive element in every situation is the
force, permanently organized and pre-ordered
over a long period, which can be advanced when
one judges that the situation is favourable (and
it is favourable only to the extent to which such a
force exists and is full of fighting ardour); there-
fore, the essential task is that of paying system-
ic and patient attention to forming and devel-
oping this force, rendering it ever more homoge-
neous, compact, conscious of itself.” – Antonio
Gramsci. As quoted by Cliff Slaughter in, What is
Revolutionary Leadership? http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/
slaughter/1960/10/leadership.html

Lenin did ‘bend the stick’

Lenin did ‘bend the stick’ in the manner (but not
the essence) of his rejection of the spontaneous
development of class consciousness by the
working class when he directed his fire against
the economists (and the present SWP) with his
’bringing class consciousness to the working
class from outside’. However he was not totally
incorrect, as Mészáros and Slaughter suggest,
he was only one-sided. The economists were totally
wrong, he was just half-right against them and
he corrected his mistake after 1905. He did
come to understand that the Bolsheviks had to
’merge in a certain sense’ with the working class
whilst still sharply posing as the opposite, a revo-
lutionary consciousness opposed to their re-
formist, trade union consciousness after the
unexpected appearance of the 1905 Soviets.
What is to be Done led them to initially oppose
these soviets on Kautskyite politics (not totally
capitulate to as the above suggests). They
thought that, like Germany and Kautsky, the
Bolsheviks would become the ‘party of the
whole class’, (thus un-dialectically substituting
party for class) and via that party the ideology of
the class would advance internally to revolution-
ary class consciousness. It was a mechanical, non
revolutionary, un-dialectical Kautskyite under-
standing of the relationship between party and
class; it led to absolute disaster in Germany 1919-
23 because it promoted an uncompromised com-
promise with the trade union bureaucracy, in-
creasingly corrupt and pro-capitalist since legali-
sation in 1890 (though Marx’s The Critique of the
Gotha Program showed this had been present
since the fusion of Eisenachers and Lassallean in
1875). However history records that Lenin and
the Bolsheviks overcame this legacy sufficiently
to make a revolution in Russia in 1917.

Slaughter’s and Mészáros’s present day formul-
ation of the relationship between party and class
is neo-Kautskyite and eminently appropriate to
the politics of the Swamp into which the MFS has
sunk. Slaughter’s apology to Mike Banda (“I owe
to Mike Banda the clear statement of this p278)
is a measure of his personal degeneration. This
apology is because he now agrees with Mike
that “the post war Trotskyists had no perspec-
tives for the revolution whereas Lenin and Trot-
sky had one (at first different, then in 1917, the

Leopold Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
struggles for the overthrow of capitalism (deeply flawed though these programmes were) is the message. No, a thousand times no, the class deserves far better than reformism hidden behind pseudo-revolutionary phrases like this!

The infamous Chapter 8 and Mészáros’s ‘structural crisis’

Now we come to the infamous Chapter 8 where practically every sentence and phrase contains a historical distortion or a deeply flawed political analysis, full of historical lies with at least one blatant open lie. Apparently “only now – as Mészáros above all has established – have we entered the period in which capitalism encounters its structural crisis, its historic crisis” (p.280).

This is a piece of anti-Marxist objectivism, ultra-left bluster designed to hide the deeply reactionary orientation of the group. This formulation has the smack of third period Stalinism which Stalin decreed had begun in 1928 when capitalism had survived its first period, the revolutionary offensive of 1917-23, then the second period of stabilization of 1924 to 28 and was now entering its third period, its final crisis where its final overthrow was inevitable. Trotsky pointed out the obvious answer to this third period nonsense; capitalism would never reach its final crisis until the working class had forged a revolutionary leadership which could lead it to overthrow the entire system:

“To the Comintern, a decisive and final revolutionary upheaval was afoot and all its sections had to prepare for the immediate advent of world revolution. As part of this theory, because the Comintern felt that conditions were strong enough, it demanded that its political positions within the workers’ movement be consolidated and that all “reactionary” elements be purged. Accordingly, attacks and expulsions were launched against social democrats and moderate socialists within labor unions where the local CP had majority support, as well as Trotskyists and united front proponents.” (Wikipedia).

This ultra-left nonsense was directly responsible for the victory of Hitler in 1933. Although we must say that whatever the Stalinised Comintern intended this objectivism was the leftist basis for a wave of class struggle which did much good work; the London Busmen’s Rank and File Movement was a product of this and so were many other militant workers’ strikes. Many have argued that when these were betrayed by the Comintern adoption of the Popular Front in 1935 many unreconstructed third period Stalinists, like Gerry Healy, became Trotskyists in reaction and in name only. There is only a grain of truth in this claim, in our opinion.

What is meant by Mészáros’s ‘structural crisis’? Is this some version of the French philosophical ‘Structuralist Marxism’; “a sociological bundle theory developed by Louis Althusser? Althusser argued that humans have no intrinsic qualities (or essence), but were socially produced accidents. These accidents are the creation of social structures, and describing them allows us to describe both humans and the human condition” (Wikipedia).

In an interview: A structural crisis of the system with Socialist Review conducted by Judith Orr and Patrick Ward, January 2009, Mészáros spells it out:

“We have reached the historical limits of capital’s ability to control society. I don’t mean just banks and building societies, even though they cannot control those, but the rest...The only feasible alternative is the working class which is the producer of everything which is necessary in our life. Why should they not be in control of what they produce? I always stress in every book that saying no is relatively easy, but we have to find the positive dimension.”

This piece of vague objectivism combined with a utopian Orwellite appeal to ‘reason’ has nothing to do with Marxism. Of course we have not “reached the historical limits of capital’s ability to control society”, their repressive state forces are very much intact and will continue to control society until the mass movement of the working class overthrows capitalism and institutes socialism on a global scale. This is presumably what he means by “the rest”, although we cannot see how he can claim that they cannot control the banks and building societies, they had just bailed them out at enormous expense to the taxpayers internationally precisely “controlling” them to serve free market capitalism and they are now “controlling” the virtual destruction of the welfare states internationally to force the working class to pay for this largesse. Apparently we will get “the only feasible alternative” by looking to the ‘positive dimension’, a better attitude will do wonders! So it is small wonder that such leftist bourgeois figures as Hugo Chávez find this view very attractive: “István Mészáros illuminates the path ahead. He points to the central argument we must make in order . . . to take to the offensive throughout the world in moving toward socialism.”

This, apparently, is how will we advance. No need for any of these tiresome Transitional Programmes to mobilise the masses, a bit of moral outrage will do the trick:

“One hedge fund manager has allegedly been involved in a $50 billion swindle. General Motors and the others were only asking the US government for $14 billion. How modest! They should be given $100 billion. If one hedge fund capitalist can organise an alleged $50 billion fraud, they should get all the funds feasible. A system that operates in this morally rotten way cannot possibly survive, because it is uncontrollable.”

We are afraid that class society “as corrupt as this” has survived for some seven to nine millennia and will continue to survive until we can marshal the revolutionary forces to get rid of it. It certainly will not fall into our hands because its time is up and it is thoroughly corrupt, like some silly version of the Hollywood movie, The Fall of the Roman Empire. Mészáros has written a huge (1000 page +) book, Beyond Capital (Merlin Press 1995) covering almost every aspect of communism and capitalism so perhaps we will find our answer on how to organise the revolution there?

Given our understanding of how important it is to fight the treacherous misleadership of the working class and the fight for a new revolution- ary leadership to make new Octobers surely Mészáros will have examined this question in detail in his 1000 + pages?

Disgraceful wiping of Trotsky

If we look at the index at the back we find that Joe Stalin gets 70 mentions, VL Lenin 47, Margare- net Thatcher 39, Rosa Luxemburg 32, Georg Lukács 27 and Trotsky only gets 8. And there is only one examination of any length, on pages 636 to 638, the rest are only passing references; he was at a meeting etc. But we will be enlight- ened on Trotsky’s contribution to the theories vital to revolutionary socialists to pursue their cause in these three vital, precious pages? Well no, all we get is a banality that Trotsky opposed Stalin’s theory of socialism in a single country and the well-known quote about how Stalin altered his Lenin and Leninism after 1924 to make it say the exact opposite of what it said before 1924. Here is Trotsky quoting Stalin:

“The overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a proletarian government in one country does not yet guarantee the complete victory of socialism. The main task of socialism, the organisation of socialist production, still lies ahead. Can this task be accomplished, can the victory of socialism in one country be attained, without the joint efforts of the proletariat of several advanced countries? No, this is impossible. For the final victory of socialism, for the organisation of socialist production, the efforts of one country, particularly of such a peasant country as Russia are insuffi- cient.” (Stalin, Lenin and Leninism, p. 40.)

Here without doubt (says Trotsky) the general position of the Bolshevik Party is correctly expressed. However, in the second edition, published a few months later, these lines were withdrawn and the exact opposite put in their place:

“But the overthrow of the power of the bourgeo- isie and the establishment of the power of the proletariat in one country does not yet mean that the complete victory of socialism has been as- sured. After consolidating its power and leading the peasantry in its wake the proletariat of the victorious country can and must build a socialist society” (Stalin, Collected Works, Vol. 6, p. 110, my emphasis).

But this disgraceful wiping of Trotsky from the historical (and pictorial) record, so common in Stalinists (and former Stalinists like Mészáros) is accompanied by a sly attempt to drag Trotsky’s close ally, Christian Rakovsky into the scheme. Rakovsky had sought the psychological reasons for the retreat from revolution of the leading cadres of revolution in the years of reaction after 1924 and Mészáros uses this to pretend that he had developed a class idealism which inverted cause and effect. He cannot find a killer quote so he makes his own proposition as if it naturally flowed from Rakovsky:

“The privilege-seeking psychology and its ideo-
logical determinations rightly deplored by Rakovsky and his comrades is grounded in these objective determinations and power relations” (p639)

“These objective determinations” turn out to be the alienation of labour he had just discussed at length, not the material reasons for that alienation. Indeed no comrade Mészáros, this “privilege-seeking psychology” was grounded in the defeat of the German Revolution which ensured material want and scarcity of life's goods in Russia and therefore inequality. This led in turn to the rise of a bureaucracy, which never forgot its own privileges when distributing those goods; the ‘old crap’ of capitalism inevitably arose anew in those circumstances. And here we can see that our first supposition about the meaning of the word ‘structural’ in the Mészáros quote used by Slaughter was substantially correct. This nonsense is a hangover from that idealist French philosophical sad of Althusser and Claude Levi-Strauss. Comrade Slaughter could re-educate himself on this by referring back to an article in an old Labour Review, where Stuart Hood comprehensively demolished this bogus ‘philosophy’: ‘To him (Levi-Strauss) all human activities are types of communication, whether they be myths, social customs, kinship rules, economic relations, dress or eating habits; they are all structured like language. By studying them he aimed ‘to discover the universal basic structure of man which is hidden below the surface’ and manifests itself in social phenomena. This is an aim that runs clean contrary to a fundamental tenet of Marxism, on which Marx stated in the 1859 Preface to the Critique of Political Economy: It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.” (Labour Review, February 1979, Vol. II, No 9, pp545-6)

**Trotzky’s theory of Permanent Revolution is meaningless**

As we shall see if Slaughter is right about socialism not being on the agenda in 1917 then Trotsky’s famous theory of Permanent Revolution is meaningless and without content, the Russian Revolution was merely a bourgeois national revolution, and so is the political content of the struggle of the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and Trotsky and its international manifestation, the Revolutionary Comintern in its revolutionary phase when it fought for the world revolution in its first four Congresses up to 1924. In order to achieve this volte face Slaughter capitulates to both Kautskyism in accepting the old Social Democratic theories of the party and of stages in the revolution and goes even further than Tony Cliff’s state capitalism in attribution a historically progressive historic role to Stalinism:

“An attempt to elaborate an exception to the theory was made by Tony Cliff of the Socialist Workers Party (Britain), in his “Theory of Deflected Permanent Revolution”. In his 1963 essay Deflected Permanent Revolution he develops the idea that where the proletariat is unable to take power, a section of the intelligentsia may be able to carry out a Bourgeois Revolution.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permanent_revolution). Unbelievably Slaughter repudiates the entire history of Trotskyism and his own life’s work (deeply flawed though it was) and there was no one left in his group to object. He avers not merely that there were some exceptions to the theory of Permanent Revolution; the entire thing was always rubbish according to our renegade.

To continue this assault Slaughter writes on the same page, “Trotzky wrote that the coming revolution would undoubtedly be bourgeois in character”. Presented thus with a full stop at the end this is the first lie because so did both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, there is nothing ‘Trotzkyist’ about this statement, you would have to qualify this statement very heavily to explain the containing political positions. In fact the statement as written can only apply to the Mensheviks. Fortunately Trotsky sums it all up for us:

**The Three Views Summed Up**

“... The Menshevik (similar) attitude toward the revolution... the victory of the Russian bourgeois revolution is conceivable only under the leadership of the liberal bourgeoisie and must hand power over to the latter. The democratic regime will then permit the Russian proletariat to catch up with its older Western brothers on the road of the struggle for socialism with incomparably greater success than hitherto.

Lenin’s perspective may be briefly expressed as follows: The belated Russian bourgeoisie is incapable of leading its own revolution to the end. The complete victory of the revolution through the medium of the “Democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry” will purge the country of medievalism, invest the development of Russian capitalism with American temps, strengthen the proletariat in the city and country, and open up broad possibilities for the struggle for socialism. On the other hand, the victory of the Russian revolution will provide a mighty impulse for the socialist revolution in the West, and the latter will not only shield Russia from the dangers of restoration but also permit the Russian proletariat to reach the conquest of power in a comparatively short historical interval.

The perspective of the permanent revolution may be summed up in these words: The complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia is inconceivable otherwise than in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat basing itself on the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which will inescapably place on the order of the day not only democratic but also socialist tasks, will at the same time provide a mighty impulse to the international socialist revolution. Only, the victory of the proletariat in the West will shield Russia from bourgeois restoration and secure for her the possibility of bringing the socialist construction to its conclusion.

These terse formulations reveal with equal clarity both the homogeneity of the last two conceptions in their irrecconcilable contradiction with the liberal-Menshevik perspective as well as their extremely essential difference from one another on the question of the social character and the tasks of the "dictatorship" which was to grow out of the revolution... The perspective of Menshevism was false to the core; it pointed out an entirely different road for the proletariat. The perspective of Bolshevism was not complete; it indicated correctly the general direction of the struggle but characterized its stages incorrectly. The inadequacy of the perspective of Bolshevism was not revealed in 1905 only because the revolution itself did not receive further development. But at the beginning of 1917 Lenin was compelled, in a direct struggle against the oldest cadres of the party, to change the perspective (i.e. Lenin's victorious fight for the April Theses).” Trotsky, Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution, 1939.

**Slaughter’s blatant lie**

Slaughter continues, “He (Trotsky) went on to question which classes would solve the task of the democratic revolution and how those classes would relate to each other”. Trotsky did not ‘question’ this but was absolutely sure that only the working class could lead the revolution and it could not simply be a ‘democratic’ revolution but an ‘interrupted’, permanent one. He and the Bolsheviks agreed that only the working class could lead the coming revolution because of the small size and belated development of the bourgeoisie and its subservience to both the Tsar and foreign, mainly French capital. On this point both were equally opposed to the Mensheviks, as we have seen above. As to actually ‘solve[ing] the task of the democratic revolution’ here Trotsky disagreed with both the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. To say he ‘interrogated Lenin’s formulation of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry (p281) is wrong. As to the relationship between the proletariat and peasantry Lenin’s formulation muddied precisely this question, not making it sufficiently clear (the ‘algebraic formula’) that the peasantry could not be on an equal footing with the proletariat precisely because Lenin thought that the coming revolution would be bourgeois led by the working class, period. And now we see the function of the implication above that Trotsky thought the same as Lenin on this point.

Trotsky had a great deal more to say from about 1903-5 that was at odds with Lenin’s conception. It was precisely this vagueness that the epigones
The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry

We can see that the bolded and peasantry above (twice) is not in the Trotsky original quote, also bolded. Further Trotsky is referring to the social content of this dictatorship and not what ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry’, an entity which Trotsky never endorsed in all his writings, might do. Slaughter has added it in to confuse us on what Trotsky’s real position was. [6] To clarify matters, ‘the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry’ means a block of the two classes, possibly on an equal footing in government, ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’ means the working class, via its revolutionary leadership ruling and leading the peasantry in a governmental alliance. There were many occasions when Lenin came very close to Trotsky’s Permanent Revolution as the following passages from the Permanent Revolution show:

Trotsky: "... The formula which the Bolsheviks have here chosen for themselves reads: the proletariat which leads the peasantry behind it.”

Lenin, "... Isn’t it obvious that the idea of all these formulations is one and the same? Isn’t it obvious that this idea expresses precisely the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry – that the "formula of the proletariat supported by the peasantry, remains entirely within the bounds of that very same dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry?” (XI, Part 1, pp.219 and 224. My emphasis [10]) And Trotsky comments:

"Thus Lenin puts a construction on the 'algebraic' formula here which excludes the idea of an independent peasant party and even more its dominant role in the revolutionary government: the proletariat leads the peasantry, the proletariat is supported by the peasantry, consequently the revolutionary power is concentrated in the hands of the party of the proletariat. But this is precisely the central point of the theory of the permanent revolution. Today, that is, after the historical test has taken place, the utmost that can be said about the old differences of opinion on the question of the dictatorship is the following:

While Lenin, always proceeding from the leading role of the proletariat, emphasized and developed in every way the necessity of the revolutionary democratic collaboration of the workers and peasants – teaching this to all of us – I, invariably proceeding from this collaboration, emphasized in every way the necessity of proletarian leadership, not only in the bloc but also in the government which would be called upon to head this bloc. No other differences can be read into the matter.”

Leon Trotsky, What is the Permanent Revolution? (Chapter 10 of The Permanent Revolution, 1929) Basic Postulates, makes it clearer in point 5;

"5. Assessed historically, the old slogans of Bolshevism – “the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” – expressed precisely the above-characterized relationship of the proletariat, the peasantry and the liberal bourgeoisie.

This has been confirmed by the experience of October. But Lenin’s old formula did not settle in advance the problem of what the reciprocal relations would be between the proletariat and the peasantry within the revolutionary bloc. In other words, the formula deliberately retained a certain algebraic quality, which had to make way for more precise arithmetical quantities in the process of historical experience. However, the latter showed, and under circumstances that exclude any kind of misinterpretation, that no matter how great the revolutionary role of the peasantry may be, it nevertheless cannot be an independent role and even less a leading one. The peasant follows either the worker or the bourgeoisie. This means that the ‘democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry’ is only conceivable as a dictatorship of the proletariat that leads the peasant masses behind it.”

We can see from the above that the political struggles that eventually culminated in the production of the April Theses which enabled the October revolution are absolutely incomprehensible if the question of the world revolution was not on the historic agenda, if global Imperialism had not advanced to the stage that it had produced a global working class with at least strong elements of a global class consciousness, such that in backward Russia the working class consciously fought for and took power in the name of that world revolution. We are meant to get the impression from Slaughter’s meanderings that Trotsky’s Permanent Revolution was merely a formulation for achieving bourgeois revolutions in backward countries. And all this reduces the struggle to the national stage, Slaughter implicitly denies the global significance of Trotsky’s great insight as Mark Hoskisson has done above, with the same intended result.

This is how those dreadful enemies of Slaughter since the mid-fifties, the ‘Pabloites’, have bowdlerised it. And this was also the game that Radek, Zinoviev and later Stalin played in China in the twenties and thirties, the two stage theory that resurrected Lenin’s old formulation repudiated by him in the April Theses, and extended it back and politically reviving the old Menshevism. This was the policy which destroyed the Chinese revolution in 1927 and led to the admitted ‘victims’ of Mao Zedong’s theory of the bloc of four classes in 1949. He took power in the name of this bloc in 1949 which politically excluded the working class but he did not institute a deformed workers’ state (with the working class still politically excluded) until 1952-3 when the advent of the Korean war meant the the erstwhile allies in the national bourgeoisie became too unreliable for government. This 1949-53 bloc of four classes was made up of the working class, the peasantry, the urban petit-bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie (http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/b/l.htm). Those expropriated between 1949 and 1952-3 were only those who had directly fought for the US-backed Kuo Min Tang in the civil war, the landlord class and the ‘comprador’ bourgeoisie, agents for foreign imperialist interests who were defined as the only enemies of the working class; the ‘national bourgeoisie’ were allowed to remain in control of their capitalist enterprises for about three more years. They might never have been expropriated (the USSR did not expropriate them in Austria post WWII or in Afghanistan after the 1979 invasion, despite holding state power). This is the Popular Frontist two stage policy still pursued today by the SAPC in South Africa via the ANC and by Maoist and other Stalinist forces from Peru to India, Nepal and the Philippines, to give a few examples. Trotsky’s theory of Permanent Revolution provided the basis for the only consistent revolutionary programme for these countries.[7]

Slaughter correcting Trotsky’s ‘errors’

Now we come on to Slaughter correcting Trotsky’s ‘errors’: “was Trotsky right when he wrote of the conditions being ‘fully ripe for the socialist revolution’. Now that we know the fate of the Russian Revolution and can make a confident prognosis concerning the likelihood of any genuine democracy in China, I think we must concede that he was not.”

So there is no ‘democracy’ (irrelevant whether bourgeois or soviets apparently) in Russia and China so Trotsky was wrong. He must really hope

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we will not take the trouble to check this quote either, no actual falsification this time but a classic of the ripping of the quote out of its context. Here is that context:

“But do you really believe, the Stalinists, Rykovs and all the other Molotovs objected dozens of times between 1905 and 1917, ‘that Russia is ripe for the socialist revolution?’ To that I always answered: No, I do not. But world economy as a whole, and European economy in the first place, is fully ripe for the socialist revolution. Whether the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia leads to socialism or not, and at what tempo and through what stages, will depend upon the fate of European and world capitalism.”

A totally different story emerges; the world revolution has escaped Slaughter’s notice entirely. And then he too inverts cause and effect:

“We learned to understand its failure to spread and its degeneration in Russia as the result of betrayals of leadership, consequent of the utopian doctrine of ‘socialism in a single country’ and the bureaucratization of the Bolshevik party and the Soviet state apparatus.”

Well no we did not learn that at all, those of us who were listening. We learned that the German Social Democrats drowned the German revolution in blood and this caused the isolation of the Russian revolution and its consequent degeneration; the doctrine of socialism in a single country and all the rest were a product of these material circumstances. They would never have arisen had the German revolution continued the forward march of the world revolution. The reciprocal reaction of cause and effect does not mean we can substitute one for the other at random like this. After 1917 the subjective factor in the unfolding of the world revolution was outside of Russia.

The final insult to the name of Trotskyism

And the final insult to the name of Trotskyism: Slaughter explains that bourgeois-democratic revolutions after 1917 were all led by Stalinists (he still cannot handle Cuba) and “it was only via this path – and not via the bourgeoisie – that nationalist capitalist states could be achieved; and that is the historic role the various Stalinist regimes, ‘workers states’ played. They prepared, and effected the transition of the nation to capitalism” (284).

Well there we have it! This implies the Bolsheviks were wrong against the Mensheviks and Trotsky was wrong against Stalin and present day Trotskyists are wrong against Stalinists everywhere. Stalinism has played a historically progressive role and their opponents on the left deserved what they got for attempting to obstruct this progressivism, as they always claimed – remember Ho Chi Minh’s remark on the great Trotskyist leader Ta Thu Thau after he has had him assassinated in 1946 as told by Daniel Guerin: “He was a great patriot and we mourn him ... but all those who do not follow the line we have laid down will be broken.” Slaughter has listened to and

imbibed the philosophy of the Stalinist Mészáros who listened to and learned his ‘Marxism’ from that other more famous Stalinist Georg Lukács, a lifelong loyal Stalinist with only minor oppositional stances, and become a Stalinist himself.

We might think how it is possible for the man who championed Stalinism until 1956, then rejected it because of Khruščev’s secret speech to the 20th Congress and the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution by Soviet tanks in the same year, then embraced what he understood as Trotskyism until 1986, then capitulated to Imperialism by espousing the notion that ‘Stalinism is the most counter-revolutionary force on the planet’ to now become a Stalinist himself once again? Stalinism was a backward nationalist capitulation to Imperialism by the bureaucracy in the first workers’ state and Trotskyism was its opposite, the fight for the world revolution as the only way forward for the world working class leading the whole of humanity out of the impasse forced on it by a decaying world Imperialist system. The manner and form of how individuals and groups like the PR group and the MIS abandon that historic task are mere details and historical accident; we have established this fact by examining these details. In the Swamp Max Shachtman, Raya Dunayevskya, CLR James and Hal Draper mediated through the works of Georg Lukács, István Mészáros, Cyril Smith and Cliff Slaughter now trump Lenin and Trotsky as political models as well as on the intimately connected question of internal democracy and the need for a workers’ state. We must continue the struggle without and against them; that fight will strengthen new revolutionists now emerging to replace them; they will supercede them and annul their failures.

Endnotes

[1] Its original central leadership are right wing in long-term general overall theoretical and political orientation. But it is in fact to the left of the AWI on many issues of the rank-and-file class struggle, as a group whose orientation is towards ‘left communism’ of the type denounced by Lenin in his 1920 pamphlet Left Wing Communism; an Infantile Disorder would be – as Bukharin and others appeared as an ultra-leftist opponent of Lenin from the revolution to the early twenties only to reveal the true content of this ultra-leftism in 1924, he was the Bolshevik leader who was most open to capitalist restoration before Stalin ditched him in 1928. So taking into account the increasing number of other amorphous dis-oriented tendencies drawn into its milieu, it can only be accurately designated as ‘The Swamp’, but with patches of dry ground here and there.

[2] 28 July 1794, 9 Thermidor, (the hot month in the ‘start again’ culture of the Revolution which renamed the months of the year and began dates with 1792 as year zero) when reaction triumphed in the French Revolution with the execution of Robespierre, St Just and 20 other leaders in Paris.

[3] Lenin writes in the State and Revolution: “The distinction between Marxists and the anarchists is this: (1) The former, while aiming at the complete abolition of the state, recognize that this aim can only be achieved after classes have been ...abolished by the socialist revolution, as the result of the establishment of socialism, which leads to the withering away of the state. The latter want to abolish the state completely overnight, not understanding the conditions under which the state can be abolished. (2) The former recognize that after the proletariat has won political power it must completely destroy the old state machine and replace it by a new one consisting of an organization of the armed workers, after the type of the Commune. The latter, while insisting on the destruction of the state machine, have a very vague idea of what the proletariat will put in its place and how it will use its revolutionary power. The anarchists even deny that the revolutionary proletariat should use the state power; they reject its revolutionary dictatorship. (3) The former demand that the proletariat be trained for revolution by utilizing the present state. The anarchists reject this.”

[4] In fairness a temporary alliance with the ‘devil or his grandmother’ (Trotsky), i.e. with Yeltsin against Yanayev is clearly permissible in defence of life and limb and the WIL were closer to that principle but even they went some way towards accepting capitalist restoration in order to attain or preserve a non-class and unspecified ‘democracy’. Sometimes you must address your propaganda towards the working class in abstract, calling on them to rise in their own self-defence when all have abandoned the struggle for their interests, even from a bureaucratic corrupted, self-interested standpoint.


[6] It is difficult to believe this is a typing error.
Such quotes are almost invariable cut and pasted from Trotsky's works online nowadays and the lack of a page number in the footnoted reference indicates that this was the case here. Clearly, having used the phrase in introducing the quote, he then altered the quote to suit his own political distortion.

[2] This is the point which Gerry Downing argued in *Imperialism is the Main Enemy*, Weekly Worker 726 Thursday June 19 2008, http://www.cpgb.org.uk/article.php?article_id=1001617 against Comrade Torab Sahib, former International Executive Committee of the USFI (United Secretariat of the Fourth International) who had attacked permanent resolution as being irrelevant today in a previous Weekly Worker article.

Part 3: Lars T Lih, the CPGB, Cyril Smith and Kautskyism

Introduction

As Karl Kautsky been misjudged by serious Marxist historians who still believe in humanity’s revolutionary future? Is Lars T Lih right “to reassess” Lenin in order to rehabilitate his infamous renegade even in his younger days before he openly went over to the class enemy? Has he really got vital lessons to teach today’s working class moving into struggle against capitalism’s deepest crisis since the end of WWII? Or is Kautsky not becoming another Gramsci, who was so useful to the old Euro-Communists of the 1970s and 80s in avoiding revolutionary Trotskyism whilst abandoning Stalinism and moving towards open reformism? Karl Kautsky was the highly respected “Pope of Marxism”, Marxism’s chief theoretician after the death of Engels in 1895, but he opposed the Russian Revolution and was famously slated as a traitor to the cause by Lenin, “burning with anger”, in his pamphlet, The Renegade Kautsky in 1918.

Vladimir Lenin’s, Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder, April—May 1920: “What happened to such leaders of the Second International, such highly erudite Marxists devoted to socialism as Kautsky, Otto Bauer and others, could (and should) provide a useful lesson. They fully appreciated the need for flexible tactics; they themselves learned Marxist dialectic and taught it to others (and much of what they have done in this field will always remain a valuable contribution to socialist literature); however, in the application of this dialectic they committed such an error, or proved to be so undialectical in practice, so incapable of taking into account the rapid change of forms and the rapid acquisition of new content by the old forms, that their fate is not much more enviable than that of Hyndman, Guesde and Plekhanov. The principal reason for their bankruptcy was that they were hypnotised by a definite form of growth of the working-class movement and socialism, forgot all about the one-sidedness of that form, were afraid to see the break-up which objective conditions made inevitable, and continued to repeat simple and, at first glance, incontestable axioms that had been learned by rote.”

So according to Lenin it was in the application of the Marxist dialectic that they failed; the rapidly changed circumstances of WWII revealed that they had become one-sided and were so trans-fixed on the rapid growth of the German working-class movement that they could not see the new content in the old forms. They were not crude mechanical materialists as Cyril Smith tries to portray them in *Marx at the Millennium*; they were not undialectical thinkers in general but were ‘erudite Marxists’ (which is more than can be said for Smith) but they still had that separation of the Maximum Programme, which they (apart from the revisionists Bernsteinites) still passionately believed in, and the Minimum Programme, the everyday agitation for workers’ rights, wages and conditions. The means of uniting and applying the revolutionary programme is the Transitional Method, which the Bolsheviks has begun to develop since learning the lessons of the role of the Soviets in the failed 1905 revolution. In Lenin’s Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder and in the struggles at the Third Congress of the Comintern 1921 that programme was elaborated and defended against the ultra-lefts who orientated to the Maximum Programme and ignored both the Minimum Programme and the means to unite the two, the Transitional Programme.

Trotsky begins the 1938 Transitional Programme with these words “The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat”. Note: not just the crisis of revolutionary leadership or even worse the ideological crises of small sects many of whom “become” that leadership in their ridiculous self-deluding imagination by self-proclamation. In that respect none are more arrogant and ridiculous than the North American Spurs lead by James Robertson and the Socialist Equality Party led by David North. No, Trotsky is talking about the actually existing counter-revolutionary leadership of the working-class; Stalinism as it originated in the USSR, China and Cuba and its international adherents, the bureaucratic trade union leadership and their reactionary political expressions in bourgeois parliaments, the bourgeois-workers parties internationally and the centrist vacillators who swing between reform and revolution. All these are now, more than ever, tied to the defence of capitalism and ever more fearful and contemptuous of their own membership.

How self-proclaimed Trotskyists and other revolutionary groups and parties seek to tackle this crisis of leadership constitutes in turn the crisis of revolutionary leadership and of Trotskyism and it is in this way and by this relationship that the crisis of revolutionary leadership becomes the vital and indispensable element of the crisis of the leadership of the proletariat as a whole. And finally also note the qualifying word “chiefly”; the crisis of the leadership of the proletariat is complemented and vitally dependent on the crisis of national liberation movements/semi-colonial countries in conflict with imperialism. The correct orientation of revolutionary groupings to this crisis, via the theory of Permanent Revolution, is a vital part of the crisis of leadership of the proletariat on a global scale. The entire Transitional Programme explains that it is in this way that “The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership”.

The character of revolutionary leadership needed today to solve this is intimately tied up with how we assess past revolutionary leaders and crucially how we regard the historical lessons to be learned from the Russian Revolution; how should revolutionary leadership relate to the Russian and international working class? Brian Pearce, the famous translator of many of Trotsky’s major works into English, concludes his review of Simon Pirani’s The Russian Revolution in Retreat 1920-1924: the Soviet workers and the new Commune elite, Routledge (London) 2008, thus: “Ought we not to see what happened in those years in Soviet Russia as a social process that began through, and was driven by, the realities of the situation, but was taken charge of by those who found it had results to their advantage? Must we not ask whether something like ‘Stalinism’ was ultimately inevitable, in a country like Russia at any rate? What difference would a revolution in Germany, say, have had on developments in Russia? We know that the best of the Bolsheviks set their hopes on that.”

Terry Brotherstone, ex-WRP and an adherent of the Movement for Socialism, (MFS, they surely have nothing as committed as a membership)
cannot abide this quite moderate defence of the heritage of the Russian Revolution – Pearce was 93 when he wrote that and his break with Stalinism was never quite complete because of the nasty experience he endured in his encounter with Gerry Healy’s ‘Trotskyism’ in the late 1950s. Brotherstone, in chiding Pearce, supplies the standard – and only possible – response to Trotsky’s opening line of the Transitional Programme:

“Is the treachery of bad leaders of the workers’ movement (in that case the German Social Democrats) any longer an adequate explanation for the tragic disappointments of the 20th century? Or do we have to re-examine the proposition of the Russian Revolutionaries that the 20th century was “rotten-ripe for socialist revolution” if only the “crisis of the leadership of the working class” could be overcome? That was the essential proposition behind the decision of many serious people of Pearce’s generation to devote their lives to the cause of communism (including yourself, Terry, RM) and, in the 1960s and 1970s, others (including the author of The Revolution in Retreat) followed suit, joining Trotskyist ‘parties’ that claimed they had absorbed the lessons of Stalinism as well as Social-Democrat betrayals... was it right to define the 20th century as one requiring only ‘the building of the revolutionary party’ to bring about world socialist revolution as ‘revolutionary situations’ matured? ... Do we not now need new thinking? Thinking that absorbs our history certainly. But thinking which recognises that it is only now – we can see, through a glass darkly perhaps, that the conditions for – and the urgent necessity of – socialist planning on a human-need basis and a world scale have emerged. If so, we need a radically new discussion about how this has come about and what to do about it.”

Right, Terry, who will achieve this “planning on a human-need basis” for us? The answer settled upon by you, Cliff Slaughter, Cyril Smith, and others (including the author of The Revolution in Retreat) followed suit, joining Trotskyist ‘parties’ that claimed they had absorbed the lessons of Stalinism as well as Social-Democrat betrayals...

Kautsky and democracy

Behind the elevation of Kautsky and the attacks on Lenin and Trotsky is the question of democracy. All through the nineteenth century the “Red Republicans” equated the goal of universal suffrage – adult male to begin with – with socialism; if the working class had universal suffrage then they would surely vote for socialism and it would have to be implemented. Bourgeois parliaments were the arena for “democracy” and, as the working class was ever growing in numbers and proportion of the population, particularly in Britain, France and Germany then the objective process of development would give us socialism. This was the rationale of the revisionism of Eduard Bernstein in the German Social Democracy and, though rejected by Kautsky and the party at the turn of the century, it did eventually reveal itself as the real, unspoken assumptions of the majority in the 1914 vote for the war credits to the Kaiser to enable WWI to be waged.

The working class itself was assigned the role of a stage army; their demonstrations and strikes served to force through parliament the enabling acts to allow for the implementation of enough nationalisation of the leading heights of industry and generous social welfare provisions so socialism would be achieved by the progressive unfolding of this inevitable historical process. This was the strategy of the far left in Britain in the struggle for the Great Reform Act of 1832, where they were deceived by the rising militarocny into assisting it in forcing a measure of power sharing on the landed aristocracy. Charism also focused on parliament, with fewer illusions but nonetheless with no apparent alternative. This parliamentarianism is the very boring political content of all Tony Benn’s speeches, it is also the essence of the more leftist reformist programme, groups of programmes as disparate as the pseudo-Trotskyst Socialist Party, Socialist Appeal and the CPGB.

The Paris Commune of 1871 was a proto-soviet and the failed Russian Revolution of 1905 finally put the working class centre-stage, finally the conundrum was solved, here was direct mass participatory democracy as envisaged in ancient Greece albeit for the elite male “citizens”. Therein lies the confusion about the dictatorship of the proletariat which Smith and the MfS, Lars T Leb et al is certainly NOT the working class and building a revolutionary party to repeat the “mistake” – “blind alley” Smith outrageously called the victory of the Russian Revolution led by the Bolsheviks. Pirani and the whole MfS eventually accepted this. And lest any serious intellect from academia should consider repeating the “mistake” of those earlier generations and devote their lives to the cause of the revolution and so connect with workers in struggle let us put as high a price as possible on our books, £80 for Pirani’s tome, £147.00 / US$ 210.00 for Lars T Leb’s Lenin Rediscovered, What is to be Done in Context, to perpetuate the division of mental and manual labour as far as possible.

Lars T Lih: the renegade’s champion

The young Kautsky was not so fundamentally different from the renegade. We cannot adopt the pre-1914 German Social Democratic party (SPD) methods as Lih proposes. John Reese, in his book The Algebra of Revolution (Routledge 1998) makes a powerful case for the mechanical, undeclared, Darwinian centrist of Kautsky’s Marxism and points out that he never fought Bernstein on method, only Rosa Luxemburg did this. His pseudo-orthodoxy hid the real class relations within the SPD; in reality the corrupt trade union bureaucrats controlled the membership. Should we not accept Trotsky’s advice to Burnham in January 1940 “beware of the infiltration of bourgeois scepticism into your ranks. Remember that socialism to this day has not found higher scientific expression than Marxism. Bear in mind that the method of scientific socialism is dialectic materialism. Occupy yourselves with serious study! Study Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, Lenin and Franz Mehring.” No mention of Kautsky unlike Lenin in 1920 but certainly no total, irresponsible rejection of the Marxist tradi- tion of the Second International as a whole.

The CPGB and Lih are using many basic Marxist concepts so ably propagated by Kautsky, M- hring, Wilhelm Liebknecht and others to smuggle in the Erfurt programme of separation of Minimum programme and Maximum programme which characterised the German SPD and led to its shipwreck after their appalling 4th

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August vote for the Kaiser’s war credits already alluded to, one of the blackest days in the history of the world workers’ movement. Cyril Smith uses total rejection to smuggle in the straightforward philosophical idealism which rejects all materialism and all dialectics in order to present a ridiculous Libertarian non-revolutionary humanist Marx as the model for today’s revolutionaries.

Crucially, was Kautsky “the Pope of Marxism”, and the SPD correct to pursue the model of the “party of the whole class” armed with the Erfurt Programme as opposed to Lenin and Trotsky’s revolutionary party armed with a Transitional Programme (workers’ united front 1920, TP 1938)?

Or was Marcel Liebman’s Leninism under Lenin the more balanced assessment of why Lenin took such a fundamentally different attitude to WWI from the SPD? The fundamental difference which we will seek to establish is that Lenin led the Bolsheviks with an increasingly different theory and practice after learning the lessons, crucially on the need for Soviet/workers councils, from the failed revolution of 1905. We will establish that the goal of Liebman is to defend the Marxist theory and practice of the revolutionary party and programme as developed by Lenin which was so spectacularly successful in leading the Russian Revolution. It was this heritage that was defended by Trotsky. The goal of both Smith and Liebman is counter-revolutionary and reactionary; to deny the new generation of revolutionists these indispensable weapons today in the struggle to forge the leadership to make the socialist revolution in the revolutionary crises that this crisis will produce in the coming months and years.

Lenin made a major practical break with SPD methods of organising after 1905 and deepened this after August 1914, by evolving a different theory on the party type and programme. This was empirical at first; attributing the centralism and struggle for theoretical clarity at least in part to illegal Russian conditions but increasingly it became conscious because of the revolutionary practice of the party. This resulted in breaking with the German Social Democratic party type such that by 1917 the Bolshevists were a totally different type of party, capable of leading a socialist revolution. In contrast the SPD top leadership formed the spearhead of the counter-revolution and their model “party of the whole class” splintered disastrously into its constituent elements: open counter-revolutionary reformism leading older, more demoralised and conservative skilled workers in the main, syndicalism, centrist and a small and confused revolutionary current. This is Liebman’s implicit proposition. And it is into this Kautskyite blind alley Lars T Lih and the CPGB seek to divert us.

Lars T Lih seeks to prove that, 1. Lenin never broke theoretically from the pre-1914 Kautsky and 2. that therefore the revolution triumphed by the use of the min-max SPD Erfurt Programme of 1891 and 3. implicitly the 1921 unified front offensive by Lenin and Trotsky and the 1938 Transitional Programme were reformist backsliding by the great revolutionists as Max Shacht- In Defence of Trotskyism page 12

man, Hal Draper, the CPGB and the AWL have sought seek to prove.

In developing his Marxism after 1905 Lenin no longer used the medium of Kautsky or even Plekhanov in the main but went straight to Marx and Engels and eventually, in 1914, to Hegel as the intellectual source of the dialectic. But the CPGB wishes to develop a Kautskyite Marxism as a fail-safe against revolutionary Trotskyism. And Lars T Lih is the unwitting, or maybe willing, cat’s paw in this project. Closely related to this is the question of what lessons we draw from the history of the Russian Revolution and subsequent history of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st in terms of the party and programme? We also need to restate the fundamental character of Lenin’s break with the old Bolshevik Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry in the 1917 April Theses following his famous analysis Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism in 1916 and its essential coincidence with Trotsky’s 1904 theory of Permanent Revolution.

Why do we take the two apparently opposing proposition of Smith and Lih and insist they are essentially the same? Smith says that Kautsky and Plekhanov distorted Marx so fundamentally that they gutted him of his Marxism - Karl Marx and the Future of the Human is one of his efforts – and we must return to the real Marx. Lenin and Trotsky followed the philosophy of these and so were little better. We must return to Marx with Cyril, who is the only one to have found his true character. Strange how this ‘discovery’ gels so well with outright reaction but that’s dialectical, we must suppose!

Lih, on the other hand, says that Lenin remained a Kautskyite all his life, only repudiating the open crossing of class lines when he progressed from centralism to counter-revolution by attacking the Russian Revolution. But in truth Lenin’s collected works are full of re-examination of what went wrong with the German Social Democracy and we make so bold as to suggest he corrected his earlier illusions in them sufficiently to lead the greatest revolution in history, so he got the bulk of that one about right, it is fair to assert. Nevertheless we must all be more Kautsky than Lenin today is the message Lih proposes, much to the delight of the CPGB’s Macnair and Bridge.

Kautsky as the inspiration for Lenin’s April Theses?

In bolstering the Stalinist/Menshevik version of revolutionary history Lih seeks to prove that it was Kautsky who was the main influence in Lenin’s April Theses of 1917 and that Trotsky’s theory of Permanent Revolution was totally irrelevant, despite the complete political coincidence between the two internationalist outlooks. Crucially he fails to identify Lenin’s 1916 book Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism as the central political development in Lenin’s thinking which enabled the April Theses to identify with the third and most important element of Permanent Revolution, the orientation to the world revolution. Reducing the fa- mous Theses to the incapacity of the Russian bourgeoisie to lead their own revolution and portraying the adoption of socialist measures as a national consideration without questioning why the working class should had developed such advanced internationalist consciousness, Lih and the CPGB demonstrate their essential capitulation to the Menshevik/Stalinist theory of socialism in a single country and a left wing version of the British Road to Socialism.

In an introduction to an article by Kautsky, Lenin and the ‘April Theses’ January 15th, 2010 by the Communists Students.

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Of course, these verbal echoes are hardly direct proof that Kautsky’s article had a large impact on Lenin. Nevertheless, they add weight to the strong circumstantial case for seeing Kautsky’s article as the catalyst for Lenin’s great innovations in his ideological outlook. The innovations are not at the level of the Marxist axioms themselves – Lenin as well as Kautsky continued to take these for granted. The innovations reveal themselves at the level of the empirical application of these axioms to Russia.

If we read the ‘theses published in 1915’ – they are in Lenin CW 21 – we see that Lenin is still advocating a bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia, albeit led by the working class and indeed in this he is still a ‘Kautskyite’. The very weak case that Kautsky led Lenin to break from Kautskyism, in this vital important matter is further undermined if we look at the previous article to the theses in Volume 21. It is Kautsky, Axelrod and Martov – true Internationalists, of course true internationalist social patriotic chauvinists is the theme of the article. And it is on internationalism that the April Theses are based, they could not be inspired from so hostile a source. Lih goes on to remark:

“Kautsky’s April article also foreshadows the later clash between Lenin and himself, Kautsky insists that socialism is impossible without democracy, by which he means political freedoms such as right of assembly, of press, and so on. Of course, Lenin also emphasised the relationship between democracy and socialism, but on a different plane. Lenin’s entire emphasis in 1917 is on mass participation in administration rather than on political freedoms. This emphasis stands in contrast to earlier old Bolshevism, for which political freedom was a central goal.”

This only goes to show that the reference to the need for soviets made by Lenin in 1915 was not a precursor to his powerful slogan All power to the Soviets of April 1917. The ‘three whalses of Bolshevism’ or ‘three pillars’- Democratic Republic, Confiscation of the Landed Estates, Eight Hours Working Day, were still the programme then with an entirely different political perspective. But Lars T Lih then presents us with a profound historical mystery, where on earth could Lenin have got the ideas of the April Theses if not from Kautsky?

"Many other candidates have been proposed for the catalyst for Lenin’s ideological innovations in 1917. Among those put forward are Hegel, Bukharin, the political writings of Marx and Engels, JA Hobson and, of course, Trotsky, but there are difficulties with each of these. Some observers have dispensed with specific catalysts and spoken either of Lenin’s cynicism or of an existential ‘rejection of Big Brother’. I have now put forth a new explanation: the role of catalyst was played by Kautsky’s article of April 1917, which showed Lenin how he could both remain loyal to central Marxist axioms and move forward to a socialist revolution in Russia without waiting for the international revolution.”

Lars T Lih would only have to skip one article in his Volume 21 to discover, much to his chagrin, that the inspiration was ‘of course Trotsky’. Here is the extract from Lenin denouncing Trotsky’s theory of Permanent Revolution in 1915. The astute Marxist will be able to see that this is a caricature of Trotsky’s Permanent revolution nonetheless it is but a few short steps away from the April Theses. Here is Lenin, On the Two Lines in the Revolution, Nov 1915:

“This state of affairs patiently indicates the task of the proletariat. That task is the making of a supremely courageous revolutionary struggle against the monarchy (utilising the slogans of the January Conference of 1912, the “three pillars”), a struggle that will sweep along in its wake all the democratic masses, i.e., mainly the peasantry...

To bring clarity into the alignment of classes in the impending revolution is the main task of a revolutionary party. This task is being shirked by the Organising Committee, which within Russia remains a faithful ally to Nashe Dyelo, and abroad utters meaningless “Left” phrases. This task is being wrongly tackled in Nashe Slovo by 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 this splendid theory.

From the Bolsheviks Trotsky’s original theory has borrowed their call for a decisive proletarian revolutionary struggle and for the conquest of political power by the proletariat, while from the Mensheviks it has borrowed “repetition” of the peasantry’s role. The peasantry, he asserts, are divided into strata, have become differentiated; their potential revolutionary role has dwindled more and more; in Russia a “national” revolution is impossible; “we are living in the era of Imperialism,” says Trotsky, and “Imperialism does not contrapose the bourgeois nation to the old regime, but the proletariat to the bourgeois nation.”

Here we have an amusing example of playing with the word “Imperialism”. If, in Russia, the proletariat already stands counterposed to the “bourgeois nation”, then Russia is facing a socialist revolution (!), and the slogan “Confiscate the landed estates” (repeated by Trotsky in 1915, following the January Conference of 1912), is incorrect; in that case we must speak, not of a “revolutionary workers’” government, but of a “workers’ socialist” government! The length Trotsky’s muddled thinking goes to is evident from his phrase that by their resoluteness the proletariat will attract the “non-proletarian [!] popular masses” as well (No. 217)! Trotsky has not realised that if the proletariat induce the non-proletarian masses to confiscate the landed estates and overthrow the monarchy, then that will be the consummation of the “national bourgeois revolution” in Russia; it will be a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry...

That is the crux of the matter today. The proletariat are fighting, and will fight valiantly, to win power, for a republic, for the confiscation of the land, i.e. to win over the peasantry, make full use of their revolutionary powers, and get the “non-proletarian masses of the people” to take part in liberating bourgeois Russia from military-feudal Imperialism” (tsarism). The proletariat will at once utilise this bidding of bourgeois Russia of tsarism and the rule of the landowners, not to aid the rich peasants in their struggle against the rural workers, but to bring about the socialist revolution in alliance with the proletarians of Europe.”

How do we assess Lenin on Trotsky?

Roy Wall says of this passage,

"I hope you’ve had a look at page 42 of the New Park edition of Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects. Trotsky states (Oct 1928) that he thinks Lenin never read his stuff on permanent revolution. I think that Lenin is criticizing a caricature of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, not Trotsky’s concept that in Russia, albeit led by the working class and indeed the very weak Trotsky counterposes his permanent revolution to the “revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants” (democratic dictatorship for short) whereas Trotsky actually counterposes his permanent revolution to the democratic dictatorship.

About the same time, 1928, Trotsky realises that the epigones were lumping his concept of permanent revolution together with another and different concept of “permanent revolution” held by Radek and Bukharin. This latter “permanent revolution” actually does counterpose socialist revolution to democratic tasks, i.e. it gives up on the Minimum program. Lenin’s 1918 criticism of the Left Communists in the party is a criticism of this giving up of the Minimum program, i.e., wrongly raising only socialist tasks... As you say, Lenin rejects the democratic dictatorship in his April Theses where he effectively comes over to Trotsky’s position. Roy”

The last sentence of the Lenin text is ambiguous on the timing of this socialist revolution; would it have to await the proletarians of Europe? As we shall see this ambiguity is present in Lenin’s formulation in 1905 and was only finally resolved in 1917. Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism (CW 22) was written in 1916 as a vital part of the preparation for the Theses but Lars T Lih and the CPGB still treat the Russian Revolution as a national event, speculate on the relationship between the working class and peasantry as if it was just a national revolution. So in their ideology Kautsky shaves hands with Stalin’s and Bukharin’s socialism in one country and the great revolutionary socialist internationalists Lenin and Trotsky are reduced to mere gamblers on revolutions in the rest of Europe. But this was not just Lenin and Trotsky. Remember they found a receptive audience for All Power to the Soviets in April 1917; already the leftest Bolshevists branches and many middle cadre like Molotov and Shliapnikov were demanding the expulsion of the Pravda editorial board, Kameney, Stalin and Muranov, for betraying the revolution by supporting the Provisional government’s war effort on the basis of Lenin’s old slogan “the

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” which the *April Theses* repudiated in favour of the essence of Trotsky’s Permanent Revolution.

Marcel Liebman shows that the inspiration for the *Theses* was not just Trotsky (albeit in a distorted form) but Lenin himself in his earlier writing. In *Leninism under Lenin* the section *Lenin and permanent revolution* pp. 79–83 details several instances of Lenin himself independently considering the essential concepts of Trotsky’s famous theory. Trotsky thought that Lenin’s democratic dictatorship was ‘unrealisable – at least in a direct, immediate sense’ *Results*, p.202. Lenin thought that the function of this democratic dictatorship was to establish bourgeois democracy and facilitate capitalist development but Trotsky maintained that ‘it would be the greatest utopianism to think that having been raised to political domination by the internal mechanism of a bourgeois revolution, can, even if it so desires, limit its mission to the creation of republican-democratic conditions for the social domination of the bourgeoisie’. (ibid. 223–4).

Liebman quotes from a letter from Adolf Joffe to Trotsky, before committing suicide in 1927, “I have often told you that with my own ears I have heard Lenin admit that in 1905 it was not he but you who were right. In the face of death one does not lie and I repeat this to you now.” And Lenin had adopted a ‘quasi-Trotskyist’ position himself in 1905 and Liebman supplies a few quotes, the best of which is what he calls a ‘typically Trotskyist’ sentence: ‘From the democratic revolution we shall at once, and preeminently leading right wingers like Kamenev, thought his methods impede that struggle at best and at worst are totally counter-revolutionary renegades. What happened on Lenin’s return in April 1917

This extract from the *Permanent Revolution* website of February 2007 explains well what happened on Lenin’s return in April 1917: “It was the editorial board of Pravda that occupied the most right wing stance within Bolshevism. Edited by Stalin, Muranov and Kamenev, the paper declared on 7 March: “As far as we are concerned, what matters now is not the overthrow of capitalism but the overthrow of autocracy and feudalism.”

On 15 March, Kamenev used Pravda’s pages to advocate conditional support for Russia’s war effort now that the autocracy had been overthrown. Small wonder then that by mid-March rank and file worker Bolshevik cells in the Vyborg district were voting for calls to expel the Pravda leadership from the party. It was Lenin who was able to transcend the limitations of the old Bolshevik programme and perspective. And it is testimony to the vitality and strength of the historically constituted Bolshevik cadre that open debate in the party led to its programmatic rearmament at the crucial hour. Lenin’s writings during the war, especially *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, led him to see that Russia was one, albeit exceptionally weak, link in the chain of world Imperialism. Of necessity therefore the programme of the coming Russian Revolution could no longer be conceived in terms of a national and democratic revolution but instead as a component of the international revolution against capitalism itself.

Lenin’s return from exile to the Finland Station allowed him to both intervene directly in the Bolshevik Party and further sharpen his programmatic armoury. At the head of the Soviet’s official welcome party the leading Menshevik Chkheidze urged Lenin to play his part in “the closing of the democratic ranks”. Lenin promptly declined, declaring instead: “The world-wide socialist revolution has already dawned . . . Any day now the whole of European capitalism may crash. The Russian Revolution accomplished by you has paved the way and opened a new epoch. Long live the world-wide socialist revolution.”

Lenin’s forthright declaration in favour of the call to establish at least a partial unity, an agreement that conflict with your opponents you must first establish at least a partial unity, an agreement that

Corin Redgrave in the Lambeth by-election in 1978. The petty bourgeois Redgraves’ clash with the working class Oxford–based future leaders of the WSL marked a turn away from the working class. The corrupt relationship with Middle-East dictators began soon after this, led by Vanessa.

In Defence of Trotskyism page 14

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
The Debacle that was Cyril Smith

Faust by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

"Our spirits yearn toward revelation /That nowhere glows more fair, more excellent, /Than here in the New Testament,/To open the fundamental text I'm moved,/With honest feeling, once for all,/To turn the sacred, blest original /Into my German well-beloved.

[He opens a volume and applies himself to it.]

"'Tis written: "In the beginning was the Word!" /Here now I'm balked! Who'll put me in accord? /It is impossible, the Word so high to praise, /I must translate it otherwise /If I am rightly by the Spirit taught. /'Tis written: In the beginning was the Thought!/Consider well that line, the first you see, /That your pen may not write too hastily! /'Tis then Thought that works, creative, hour by hour? /Thus should it stand: In the beginning was the Power!/Yet even while I write this word, I falter, /For something warns me, this too I shall alter.

The Spirit's helping me! I see now what I need /And write assured: In the beginning was the Deed!

The WRP's "red professor"

And was not the old Workers Revolutionary Party's "red professor", the Libertarian Marxist-Humanist Cyril Smith's Marx at the Millennium another attempt to "rediscover Marx" in order to gut Marxism of its revolutionary content, to 'turn Marx into a common liberal' as Lenin famously said Kautsky had done? Having succeeded in transforming the Cliff Slaughter group (the MIS) into an anti-Trotskyst, anti-communist cabal are we not obliged to give them open ideological protection of semi-religious husks to see the real human spirit fighting to get out. Of course the Greek dialecticians like Heracleitus and the Roman atheists like Titus Lucretius Caro are of prime interest along with Aristote and Plato for their astounding breadth understanding. But with the fall of the ancient world in the West it was only partially preserved in the Byzantine Empire and by the Muslim scholars, who did begin to develop it before the Crusades.

But it is possible to see it begin to re-emerge in the neo-Patonists and Gnostics which culminated in the great modern thinker, a great greatest philosopher of the early middle ages, Johannes Scottus Eriugena. He was condemned by two councils: that of Valentine in 855, and that of Langres in 859. By the former council his arguments were described as Pultes Scotorum (an Irishman's porridge) and commentum diabol (an invention of the devil). Eriugena's great work, De divisione naturae (Periherpes), which was condemned by a council at Sens by Honorius III (1225), who described it as "swarming with worms of heretical perversity", and by Gregory XIII in 1585.

Leszek Kolakowski, the renowned Polish Marx scholar, has mentioned Eriugena as one of the primary influences on Hegel's, and therefore Marx's, dialectical form. In particular, he called De Divisione Natura to a prototype of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, (Main Currents of Marxism, Vol. I, pp23-31). Source Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Divisione_Naturae

Marxists have always sought those closest to materialism

When we look at pre-Enlightenment figures Marxists have always sought out those closest to materialism and who had a sophisticated approach to reality which approximated in some way to dialectics. They tried to penetrate the religious-mystical husk to see the real human spirit fighting to get out. Of course the Greek dialecticians like Hezarclitus and the Roman atheists like Titus Lucetius Caro are of prime interest along with Aristotle and Plato for their astounding breadth understanding. But with the fall of the ancient world in the West it was only partially preserved in the Byzantine Empire and by the Muslim scholars, who did begin to develop it before the Crusades.

Instead, humanity seems to be in the grip of some invisible, malevolent force... for reasons we are quite unable to explain. Real Marxists have no difficulty explaining that. Elsewhere Cyril let us into the secret. Not alone does he to take the wrong side of the Enlightenment debate on human nature above but according to an obituary by David Black in The Hobgoblin, Cyril assures us in his Karl Marx and the Future of the Human, http://www.thenohobgoblin.co.uk/2008_12_08_CyrilSmith.htm"

"traced the origins of "self-creation" in pre-Enlightenment thought and showed how it re-emerged in the dialectical thinking of Hegel and Marx (and the visionary poetry of William Blake). The scientific-rationalists and their "Marxist" inheritors had seen the natural world "in terms of mechanically interacting particles of matter and humanity as a collection of individuals." Cyril contrasted this view with the pre-Enlightenment "mystics, Hermetics and magicians," for whom the human is only an aspect of the natural and vice versa"

And now quoting Smith;

"...Hegel takes the side of the magicians on this issue: the movements of nature, history and psychology all express the unfolding of Spirit. But what about Marx? Does human self-emancipation, a task for humans to tackle in practice, require any specific conception of the universe? In the inhuman shell of private property, money, capital and the state, Marx uncovers the source of the mystery of self-creation. Once that "integument has burst asunder", relations within a free association of producers, truly human relations, will be transparent and thus so will the relationship between nature and humanity as a whole."

But we are too harsh on Cyril, are we not? Surely by the use of the word "seems" in "humanity seems to be in the grip of some invisible, malevolent force" he meant this was the false ideas of others and the revolution would burst the "integument" (shell) asunder? Sadly no. Smith goes on to attack the fundamentals of Marxism (which he attempts to marginalise by putting it in inverted commas). He is a fundamentally dishonest polemist. In the guise of attacking Stalinist distortion of Marxism he attacks Marxism, in the guise of attacking Kautsky's and Plekhanov's 'mechanical materialism' he attacks all materialism, in the guise of attacking dialectical materialism he advocates pathetic idealism, in the guise of attacking historical materialism he attacks the very notion of human progress in the fight against oppression. In the manner he advocates the pre-Enlightenment clerical mystics as the pre-cursors to Marx one can only liken him to the Chinese Falun Gong who similarly see the Enlightenment as the beginning of where it all went wrong.

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Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!
In Defence of Trotskyism page 16

Johannes Scottus Eriugena on the Irish £5 note: His De divisione naturae was condemned by successive popes and Church Councils from 859 to 1585 because of its implied materialism.

Lenin of having a ‘supersitious panic of God’: “It is particularly comic to see Lenin’s supersitious panic every time Hegel mentions God” in his Philosophical Notebooks (vol 38)!

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stupidly asserts that Marx was right on the Russian question where he supported those Narodniki who thought that Russia could go straight from the pseudo-egalitarian peasant communes, the Mir, to socialism without having to endure the horrors of capitalist accumulation. Marx shunned Plekhanov’s Marxism. Lenin solved the dispute beyond doubt when he produced his epic work, The Development of Capitalism in Russia, constituting the whole of Volume 3 of his collected works. Plekhanov was entirely correct, peasants cannot lead a socialist revolution as Smith ridiculously proposes, “Russian revolutionary socialists must redouble their efforts to prepare for this revolution, while rural property forms still survived, otherwise this chance would not return” (ibid, p60-1). In this manner this ignorant politroon consigns Marxism’s greatest theorists and practitioners to the dustbin of history, sounding a great deal like Robert Service in his apalling biographies of Lenin and Trotsky. Cyril ‘corrects’ Marx by making him a liberal like himself!

But Cyril knows the real Marx better than anyone else it seems. Nevertheless he has to “correct” Marx when his formulations are a little “confused”; “The ‘Marxist’ discussion of the relation between ‘material social relations’ and consciousness implied that it accepted their separation. Human activity can be considered independently of consciousness and its forms only by ignoring what humanity is. When Marx said: ‘It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but their social being that determines their consciousness’, the ‘Marxists’ heard that human thinking is inevitably moulded by external ‘social conditions’. They weren’t listening. Marx was pointing to the way that alienated social life appears to those who live it. Their liberation means the expansion of the power of consciousness to determine their social being, determined to discover all its implications and its objective basis. He began to probe every aspect of the ideas of the International, including especially his own – although he rarely says so”. (p90)

So after the revolution and the construction of communism it will be, “Thought that works, creative, hour by hour?” as Goethe lampooned it and we won’t have to work anymore, just think hard enough! Bad enough coming from Smith but listen to another ‘Marxist professor’ saying the same stupid thing:

“Nor should it be supposed that ‘social being that determines consciousness’ is an eternal law of history. The Critique of Political Economy describes the dependence of social consciousness on the relations of production as a fact that has always existed in the past, but it does not follow that it must be so forever. Socialism, as Marx saw it, was vastly to change the sphere of creative activity outside of the productive forces, freeing consciousness from mystification and social life from reifies social forces. In such conditions, consciousness, i.e. the consciousness will and initiative of human beings, would be in control; of social processes so that it would determine social being rather than the other way about”. (our emphasis) Main Currents of Marxism Vol I – Kolakowski, p. 345, Oxford University press, 1978.

Part 4: Max Shachtman, Hal Draper and Raya Dunayevskaya:

How the Msf and The Commune unite to attack Matganna’s AWL and the CPGB from the right!

The foregoing serves as a good introduction to current political problems on the anti-Trotskyist left, if we may call them that. When the US SWP split in 1939 Burnham and Shachtman refused to defend the USSR as a degenerated workers’ state against the enormous anti-communist witch hunts then in train following Stalin’s pact with Hitler, joint invasions of Poland, and invasion of the Baltic states and Finland. The desertion of the cause of the revolution by leading intellectuals like Max Eastman, Sidney Hook etc. had been going on for a decade

The specific issue raised the question of the dialectic in the analysis of the class nature of the USSR and Trotsky explained both in clear terms which the serious Marxists can find in the collection In Defence of Marxism. Whereas Burnham became an open apologist for Imperialism immediately Shachtman took the Kautsky road before becoming a renegade whose anti-communist propaganda was dropped from US war planes to demoralise the North Korean communists. In his centrist phase between Trotskyism and outright reaction he led the Workers Party (some 40% of the SWP at the split) and they continued to call themselves Trotskyists whilst producing analyses of the revolutions in China and capitalist over turns in Eastern Europe which defended Imperialist interests, as Kautsky did between 1914 and 1917.

This centrist semi-Trotskyist semi-imperialist outfit with their bureaucratic-collectivist analysis of the USSR proved too radical for some and they suffered a split to the right led by CLR James, the Trinidadian ex-Trotskyist and Raya Dunayevskaya, Trotsky’s former Russian language secretary who left over the Stalin-Hitler pact.

It must be emphasised that by the anarchist nature of groupings of this type no one entirely agrees with anyone else and no one fights to clarify the group politically on any question lest they become offended at being challenged. The AWL has a liberal regime with a guru, Matgamna, who welcomes Cyril Smith’s anti-socialism in organisational form and increasing democratisation of Poland, and invasion of the Baltic states and Finland. The desertion of the cause of the revolution by leading intellectuals like Max Eastman, Sidney Hook etc. had been going on for a decade

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A grouping that is only entirely externally out the labour movement, concentrating on the isolated alienated individual’s angst under capitalism and seeking solutions in mental revolutions which avoids the necessity of the class struggle and mass mobilisation for a socialist revolution.

Althusser’s epistemological break between the young Marx of The German Ideology and the mature Marx of Capital is the false starting point where goal and means are totally separated - Trotsky’s Terrorism and Communism was the book that Smith hated the most because it defended unapologetically the revolutionary violence necessary to win the Civil War, later codified in his famous book in defence of Communist morality, Their Morals and Ours.

Althusser rejects the humanism in Marx in order to justify Stalinism and rubbish the communist goals of human liberation. Smith rejects the revolution in Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky in order to make his peace with the liberal-reactory establishment, just as Professor Dühring did in Engels’s time, Kautsky did in Lenin’s time and Dunayevskaya did in Trotsky’s time.

When The Commune broke from the AWL in 2008 it was to this current Chris Ford orientated. They have succeeded in drawing in Cyril’s former comrades, Cliff Slaughter’s Movement for Socialism and Permanent Revolution comrades, who are moving from anti-democratic bureaucratic centralism but with political struggle to anarchosyndicalism in organisational form and increasingly in politics. They were closest to The Commune in their reaction to the British jobs for British workers strikes. Mark Hoskisson’s repudiation of Leninism and Trotskyism in PR 17 can only be seen as an abandonment of revolutionary politics and an accommodation to this anti-communist milieu. He takes it for granted, for example, that the taking of the St Peter’s and
Part 5: Lars T Lih, Kautsky, Lenin and the CPGB

I have speculated and considered over a period, the last year or so, on the reason why the CPGB/Weekly Worker has given so much time and space to the investigative method and the, so not modestly invoked, revolutionary discoveries of Lars T Lih.

Firstly, he suggested last year, that it was Karl Kautsky, who personally made it ‘apparent’ to Lenin the inspiration for his ‘April Theses’, by way of Kautsky’s article in ‘Die Neue Zeit’, writing as he did at the time on the 1917 February rising in Russia.

Now we learn from this same professor that there were no essential differences between Lenin’s newly considered orientation, and that of Kamenev, Stalin, Zinoviev and other leading members of the central committee of the Bolshevik Party throughout the months between March and October, save for ‘misinterpretation’ of the words vast, control and compromise. Is there really a ‘science’ in this work of Lih? If so, what science can truthfully dissect and examine Lenin’s conception of old-Bolshevism from this, purported re-direction as outlined in the April Theses, itself a seminal document and precursor to the Bolshevik/Soviets taking power in October 1917?

The concluding five points Lih made in this latest ‘revelation’, excludes the very mention of the proletariat as ‘being’ at the very heart of the ‘old and new’ Bolshevism. Is this accidental? I would suggest that Lih has taken even Kautsky’s view of 1917 Russian history as dead wrong.

I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!

Leon Trotsky, May 1920: “Precisely because historical events have, with stern energy, been developing in these last months their revolutionary logic, the author of this present work asks himself: Does it still require to be published? Is it still necessary to confute Kautsky theoretically? Is there still theoretical necessity to justify revolutionary terrorism?

Unfortunately, yes. Ideology, by its very essence, plays in the Socialist movement an enormous part. Even for practical England the period has arrived when the working class must exhibit an ever-increasing demand for a theoretical statement of its experiences and its problems. On the other hand, even the proletarian psychology includes in itself a terrible inertia of conservatism – the more that, in the present case, there is a question of nothing less than the traditional ideology of the parties of the Second International which first roused the proletariat, and recently were so powerful. After the collapse of official social-patriotism (Scheidemann, Victor Adler, Renaudel, Vanderwelde, Henderson, Plekhanov, etc.), international Kautskianism (the staff of the German Independents, Friedrich Adler, Longuet, a considerable section of the Italians, the British Independent Labor Party, the Martov group, etc.) has become the chief political factor on which the unstable equilibrium of capitalist society depends (i.e. on the Centrists RM). It may be said that the will of the working masses of the whole of the civilized world, directly influenced by the course of events, is at the present moment incomparably more revolutionary than their consciousness, which is still dominated by the prejudices of parliamentarism and compromise. The struggle for the dictatorship of the working class means, at the present moment, an embittered struggle with Kautskianism within the working class. The lies and prejudices of the policy of compromise, still poisoning the atmosphere even in parties tending towards the Third International, must be thrown aside. This book must serve the ends of an irrevocable struggle against the cowardice, half-measures, and hypocrisy of Kautskianism in all countries.”

From The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky

Vladimir Lenin, November 1918: ‘The Bolsheviks’ tactics were correct; they were the only internationalist tactics, because they were based, not on the cowardly fear of a world revolution, not on a phobia of “lack of faith” in it, but on the narrow nationalist desire to protect one’s “own” fatherland (the fatherland of one’s own bourgeois), while not “giving a damn” about all the rest, but on a correct (and, before the war and before the apostasy of the social-chauvinists and social-pacifists, a universally accepted) estimation of the revolutionary situation in Europe. These tactics were the only internationalist tactics, because they did the utmost possible in one country for the development, support and awakening of the revolution in all countries. These tactics have been justified by their enormous success, for Bolshevism (not by any means because of the merits of the Russian Bolsheviks, but because of the most profound sympathy of the people everywhere for tactics that are revolutionary in practice) has become world Bolshevism.

Scheidemanns and Kautskys, Renaudels and Longquets, Hendersons and MacDonalds, who from now on will be treading on each other’s feet, dreaming about “unity” and trying to renew a corpse. Bolshevism has given the ideological and tactical foundations of a Third International, of a really proletarian and Communist International, which will take into consideration both the gains of the tranquil epoch and the experience of the epoch of revolutions, which has begun.”

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The author is billed as a Canadian historian/academic, presumably he does not consider himself a Marxist, or if he does so he assuages any self-definition thus so to, again presumably, give to his work an air of ‘academic neutrality’ as distinct from any accusation of ‘dogmatism’. There have been many earlier minds similarly ‘tuned in’ on the ideological driving-force as to Lenin’s directives and urgings during those months of 1917 - and they all testify to the class positions of these ‘viewers’ regarding the social and political overturn of October.

The simple fact is this, that without the totally new economic, social and political conditions revealed in the Imperialist war beginning in 1914, old-Europe, like old-Bolshevism, could not have had the stage for October’s revolution. "Professor Lih, in his latest article, brings prominently..."
before us "his often repeated views of Kamenev, as the archetypical old-Bolshevik leader, as distinct from Lenin, where he says: "Those Bolshevists, like Kamenev, were opposed to Lenin. They were arguing that his opposition to the Provisional government was too empty, too formal - too much like just sitting there saying that it is an imperialist government. They asked: how do we get across the message that an imperialist government is bad? Let's put across some specific demands to expose this government. Let's be more specific and help the Bolshevists who are working in local Soviets.

So my argument about this whole debate is that it was a kind of misunderstanding. Lenin read in the papers about control and got upset. When hearing Lenin say that all that was needed was patient explanation about the need for Soviet power, others responded by pointing out that they were in a revolutionary situation and there was a need to be doing things. That is the rather paradoxical aspect of this whole debate. These old Bolshevists were accusing Lenin of being rather passive! And if you read some of what Lenin was saying then you can see why they were wondering what their chief was actually thinking.

In any event, I think this debate is not as important as it is made out to be and that both sides were thinking along the same lines and just trying to formulate a concrete strategy." (Lars T Lih)

Lih asserts most certainly that there was somehow just a difference in interpreting vlast and kontrol - therefore Bolshevism was spun simply on a misinterpretation! As the events of social and political processes unfolded over the spring to summer - summer to autumn, the unviability of the Kerensky, Miliukov and Guchkov provisional government, straddled between, on the one hand, the war weary, hungry, displaced workers and landless displaced peasants forced together in military combinations (in war) and thereby into disparate armed Soviets and those urban Soviets of workers, who were initially more the politicised because of their tradition of 'foundering' the one 'big' Soviet in 1905 St Petersburg.

Reflecting the political orientation of these afore-mentioned Soviets were the parties to which they either sympathised with or were members of: The Socialist Revolutionaries (left and constitutional), Menshevik (constitutional and internationalist) and Bolshevik (Leninist and compromısist) - on the other hand the prevarications of the provisional government whose attitude and control of the war had brought through to prominence the reactionary Kadet Party - Junkers and Cossacks of the Whites' reaction with General Kornilov's plans to overturn the whole preceding bourgeois democratic strikes/constituent assembly - the February earlier passage.

Unless the reader has an empathy and an understanding of the very process then forming the actual future of the `undefined' democracy in Russia at this time, i.e., revolution and counter-revolution implicit in the contending dual-power showing itself, academic 'misunderstandings' can be passed for good coin and simple differences.

Did Lih ever read Trotsky's 'History of the Russian Revolution? Did he dismiss altogether the multifarious archive basis of that enormous work? Perhaps Trotsky's earlier foresight ('Permanent Revolution', in theory and leader of St Petersburg Soviet 1905, in practice) and immediately on his arrival at Petrograd in May 1917, having a total attachment to the revolutionary process in its actual making and success. Trotsky, is in Lih's view (in this piece unmentioned) an inconsequent absentee - why so? Was that 'other' essential leader (non-Bolshevik?), suitable for omission in this, his most authoritative of new appraisals.

"...The power is taken over, at least in Petrograd. Lenin has not yet had time to change his collar, but his eyes are very wide-awake, even though his face looks so tired. He looks softly at me, with that sort of awkward shyness that with him indicates intimacy. "You know," he says hesitatingly, "from persecution and a life underground, to come so suddenly into power... He pauses for the right word. "Es schwindelt," he concludes, changing suddenly to German, and circling his hand around his head. We look at each other and laugh a little. All this takes only a minute or two; then a simple "passing to next business. The government must be formed. We number among us a few members of the Central Committee. A quick session opens over in a corner of the room.

What shall we call them?" asks Lenin, thinking aloud. "Anything but ministers that's such a vile, hackneyed word."

"We might call them commissaries," I suggest, "but there are too many commissaries just now. Perhaps 'supreme commissaries' No, 'supreme' does not sound well, either. What about 'people's commissaries'?

"People's commissaries? Well, that might do, I think," Lenin agrees. "And the government as a whole?"

"A Soviet, of course... the Soviet of People's Commissaries, eh?"

"The Soviet of People's Commissaries?" Lenin picks it up. "That's splendid; smells terribly of revolution!"

Lenin was not much inclined toward the aesthetic of revolution, or toward relishing its "romantic quality. But all the more deeply did he feel the revolution as a whole, and all the more unmistakably did he define its "smell."

"And what," Vladimir Ilyich once asked me quite unexpectedly, during those first days "what if the White Guards kill you and me? Will Sverdlov and Bukharin be able to manage?"

"Perhaps they won't kill us," I rejoined, laughing. 

"The devil knows what they might do," said Lenin, laughing in turn.

In 1924, in my recollections of Lenin (after his death), I described this incident for the first time. I learned afterward that the members of what was then a "trio" Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev felt terribly offended by it, although they did not dare contradict it. But the fact remains that Lenin only mentioned Sverdlov and Bukharin. He did not think of any others. Trotsky - My Life (1930)

But let us here go back a while and reflect on the views of the historical linearity of Russian Marxism as a precursor to Bolshevism, and what that tradition said: "...To appreciate Lenin's historic contribution there is no need whatever to try to show that from his early years he was obliged to break the virgin soil with a plough of his own.

"There were almost no comprehensive (Marxist) works available (to Lenin when he began his studies)," writes Elisarova (a Stalinist historian), parroting Kamenev and others. "It was necessary for him to study the original sources (government local statistics on peasant and worker life) and draw from them his own deductions."

Nothing could be more offensive to Lenin's own rigorous scientific scrupulousness than this claim that he took no account of his predecessors and teachers. Nor is it true that in the early Nineties (1890s) Russian Marxism possessed no comprehensive works.

The publications of the Emancipation of Labour Group already constituted at the time an abridged encyclopedia of the new tendency. After six years of brilliant and heroic struggle against the prejudices of the Russian intelligentsia, (Georgy) Plekhanov proclaimed in 1889 at the Socialist World Congress in Paris, The revolutionary movement in Russia can triumph only as the revolutionary working-class movement. There is and there can be no other way out for us. These words summed up the most important general conclusion from the entire preceding epoch and it was on, the basis of this generalization of an "émigré" that Vladimir (V. I. Lenin) pursued his education ... - Trotsky on 'How Lenin Studied Marx' (1936)

The Russian Marxist movement of Marxist/ Plekhanov origins, was particularly distinguished from the 'Peoples' Will' or anarchic peasant oriented Narodniki, and by their turn, to the
revolutionary nature of that class of proletarians who by their nature would be the only consistent 'class' i.e., progressive social force to both underlie the possible capitalist social growth and conflict, both with and without the bourgeois representatives in the form of an organic liberal democratic challenge to the feudal Romanov dynasty around which the overwhelming majority-population of middle and lower peasantry farmed the huge area of the productive land. We know that both Lenin and Plekhanov were two of the principle figures of the émigré editorial board of the Iskra (The Spark) group in 1902/03 London, and it was at this time that the young Trotsky joined the sitting six on that board alongside Lenin, Martov and Potresov in the 'new generation' as against the older émigrés of Plekhanov, Zasulitch and Axelrod.

But Lenin's appreciation of Plekhanov's earlier role as propagandiser and populariser of Marxism did not alter, his émigré-London acquired total conviction, that a functional fighting revolutionary party required more than that which the 'old man' Plekhanov had in him to give. The soon to be revealed split between the majority Bolshevik and minority Menshevik was at the 'foundry' where sparks flew apart and where Lenin, ironically, initially with the backing of Plekhanov, split with Martov on the forged commitment of a party members' responsibilities.

In the light (or darkness) of Lih's previous reference to Lenin's support of Plekhanov, split with Martov on the forged commitment of a party members' responsibilities. The in darkness led astray by the likes of Lih. Virtually every line of his latest piece is an eclectic jumble of part programme - part perspective, it's like an elusive multi-headed monster slipping out of one's grasp through lack of substance or placement. Where Lih says: “Old Bolshevism can be defined as strategy, as an outlook. Lenin himself, in 1910 or 1911 said that Bolshevism became a tendency in 1905 - a strong hint that we should be looking for the strategy pursued in this era...” Lenin defined Bolshevism as a revolutionary tendency - as opposed to the 'undefined popular front Social Democracy' tendency of Menshevism - as the essential different tendency, to build a resolute, determined party capable of single-mindedly leading the proletariat to power - and not anything more, neither in outline nor otherwise Mr Lih. Lih says; “...First, old Bolshevism was a vision and strategy of democratic revolution, and carrying through the democratic revolution to the end...” - old Menshevism had exactly the same goal (in theory - at least) during the period under consideration Mr Lih. "That phrase - 'carrying the democratic revolution to the end' - is probably more helpful than the 'democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry'. It was commonly used at the time, but its use has been obscured by Soviet translators into English, who not only paraphrased it, but used different paraphrases each time." Carrying the 'democratic revolution to the end' was used within the context of Czarism, including the bourgeois groups in the state Duma, where these social/political tendencies would fight it out or capitulate entirely until resurrected after burrowing into the 'rightist' bureaucracy after 1924. The role of the proletariat was certainly clear to all Russian Social Democracy (Bolshevik and Menshevik) preceding 1917, but the role of the peasantry was considered an economic and political variable, dependent to the, more or less considered view, on the success of the bourgeois resolve to fight for the hegemony of the varying layers of those lower and middle petty bourgeois sectors in relation to the suppression of the landlords power and to their connectivity with town life and central government. There were a number of open questions that couldn't be outlined with finality in their perspectives right through to mid-1917.

Leon Trotsky: I am confident of the victory of the Fourth International; Go Forward!