

AD

October 31, 1979

Dear Mike:

Having reread, literally for the 20th time, that horrid 1909 article on "Our Differences" that Trotsky was so proud of that he reprinted it in 1922 and referred to it on every possible occasion, including the History of the Russian Revolution, by which time he actually claimed that the footnote (the 1922 footnote) was more than correct, that is to say, that Stalinism actually proved it -- I have decided that I do wish you to write a review-essay on Baron Kisti-Lew's book. Indeed, the very fact that a non-Trotskyist and one academic enough to have caught quite a few of the "retelling" of history in the manner in which the same story would be told by Trotsky differently, depending upon the historic period and the audience addressed, would nevertheless build the entire massive work on the "context" of Permanent Revolution, really demands a burial of that Trotsky's so-called theory. Therefore, I want to point out some of the things in that article (get Havy's copy of 1905):

1) There is no doubt that from the very title, which has a star and has the first of its 1922 footnotes, he actually not only was after the mantle of Lenin, but thought that his was the ZEM theory which made 1917 a success. Thus, he repeats, against the "official position of Bolshevism", the very big-quoted that he used may back, i.e. from 1905 on, and that is calling what Lenin had called "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" just "democratic", leaving out the word, "revolutionary." And please note that that is stated as an Appendix to the very article, which claims that though there is a difference between the Menshevik slogan for "bourgeois democracy" and "bourgeois revolution", and that of the Bolshevik's slogan for a "democratic dictatorship of the prol. and peasantry" (I'm quoting Trotsky who always left out the word "revolutionary") -- in essence they are the "same" since by daring to say proletariat and peasantry, instead of his "proletariat supported by peasantry", they are, in fact, extracting to the Mushik "the task of liberating a bourgeois nation from its bonds" and "history cannot extract the Mushik..."

2) In the latest rereading this morning, I tried to read it with very positive eyes of a Trotsky himself, i.e. what could LT possibly have meant as a serious revolutionary, and one who remained so. And why was he so proud of that prophecy of his? And there was absolutely no way not for once to believe that Stalin was absolutely right on the question of Trotsky's total hatred of the peasantry. Indeed, there are a couple of sentences that never stop being repeated as to just how politically backward the peasantry is.

3) Whereas, in the 5th subsection (V), LT throws in, out of nowhere, and after he has spoken only of how awful the Mensheviks are, the phrase "together with the Bolsheviks", in VI, he goes in for "real proof", quoting Lenin and using all his powers of irony about the fact that constant repetition about "the coalition of the proletariat and peasantry", and about "democracy", "does not make it any more correct." And, after he does all that, he refers to the fact that he has "demonstrated in detail elsewhere" how that "class asceticism", "quasi-Marxist asceticism is bound to collapse utterly." The reference is to his 1905, the "Summing up" section, which, incidentally not so incidentally, had in fact not yet used the expression Permanent Revolution

15205

and -- and this "and" is key -- he raised as the highest point, along with RL the St. Petersburg General Strike of October-November, the December mass uprising. Now the December mass uprising, which was the highest point since it was an outright insurrection and not just a General Strike, happened when RL was already arrested, and which was led not by the "Menshevik" Soviet but by the Bolshevik, specifically Lenin, leadership. Lenin is never mentioned in a single word, ~~and the Mensheviks are never mentioned in a single word.~~

4) Quite the contrary, he returns to the fact that though the difference between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks on class struggle, is "very considerable": "while the anti-revolutionary aspects of Menshevism have already become fully apparent, those of Bolshevism are likely to become a serious threat only in the event of victory." It's at that point, that he has that ridiculous 1922 ftm. which says that the prediction "never materialized because" Lenin, in the Spring of 1917 changed the policy of the Bolsheviks "not without inner struggle" and that that occurred "before the seizure of power."

then
(Clearly, what IL is saying is that only the April thesis saved/ from the logic of their position, and what is implicit here is that the April Thesis was a result of Lenin's accepting IL's theory of Perm. Rev'n. The Stalinists hardly waited for him to make it explicit, even as he didn't start making it explicit until he didn't succeed in grabbing the mantle of Lenin, or, I'm sorry to say, since he didn't bother to attend Lenin's funeral, ~~he didn't even~~ he actually try to substitute his own mantle. In any case, beginning with My Life, he started the story of Joffe's claim that Lenin had told him something about Trotsky having been "right" ~~and~~ he having been "wrong" on Permanent Rev'n. He further developed this in his History of the BR, and on and on and on, ~~again~~

that what made this all so much sharper to me was the way he related to Luxemburg. While that 1922 edition (1922) did not reproduce the paragraph of the 1907 speech about the affinity between Luxemburg and himself, in IL's writings after he was expelled, that para. suddenly becomes not only central but what is far worse, claiming RL as the banner of the 4th International. Outside of all the things RL had against IL, none of which he ever reported, and outside of the fact that even he had to ~~admit~~ admit that somehow they hadn't taken to each other, and that he had, in fact, underestimated her, the Mary-Alice Waters reproduction of the 1932 article, "Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg", he again, mis-states history insofar as Lenin's relationship to RL. Thus he makes it appear (p.443) that VII did not support Luxemburg up to 1914, whereas, in fact, they had been extremely close in the 1905 Rev'n, in 1906 when she spent time at Kuckala, and in fact both at the 1907 Congress and afterward. About the only time, outside of the National question of course, over which they always fought, the only time VII was with Kautsky against RL was on the question of discipline in 1911.

And again in 1935 on the question of "Luxemburg and the 4th International", where IL puts the 4th International under the 3 Is, he attributes, of all things, an affinity on the question of leadership and organization, to himself and RL. On that question there couldn't have possibly be a greater, in fact a total, difference between the two. Let's meet somewhere in November and make some notes for me on the Knei-Fas book for me by then.
Yours,