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Capitalist Democracy: A Contrast Between the Position of Lenin and That of Trotsky

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Without fail, all the corrupt "labor" leaders and hirelings of the bourgeoisie justify their treachery by invoking the names of Marx, Lenin or other dead revolutionary leaders. This is made possible because the valiant fighters for the cause of the working class are not able to rise from the grave and shout: Messieurs Blums, Stalins, Trotskys, you lie!!! But whereas the tongues of the leaders of socialism remain silent, their writings (if only there be found people willing and capable to uncover the material) speak out with greatest indignation against the policies and practices of the shameless opportunists.

For the present, we limit ourselves to showing the difference between Lenin's position on bourgeois democracy and Trotsky's. We do this because of the erroneous conclusion many workers have formed in viewing Stalin as the reviser of Leninism and Trotsky its rightful inheritor. The quotations demonstrate conclusively that this is not the case; that Trotsky, far from following in Lenin's footsteps, is aping Stalin all down along the line.

Lenin: The bourgeoisie, whose rule the Socialists are now defending in talking against "dictatorship in general" and standing up for "democracy in general", has conquered power in the advanced countries at the price of a number of revolts, civil wars, forcible suppression of Kings, feudal lords, slave owners, and of all their efforts at restoration. The Socialists of all countries have explained to the people thousands of millions of times in their books, in their pamphlets, in the resolutions of their congresses, in their agitational speeches, the class character of these bourgeois revolutions and of this bourgeois dictatorship. **Therefore the present defense of bourgeois democracy** under the appearance of speeches about "democracy in general" and the present shrieks and cries against the dictatorship of the proletariat in the shape of cries about "dictatorship in general" are a direct betrayal of socialism, in fact mean passing over to the side of the bourgeoisie, denying the right of the proletariat to its own, proletarian revolution, defending bourgeois reformism at the very historical moment when bourgeois reformism throughout the whole world has collapsed and when the war has created a revolutionary situation. (From the Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat at the First Congress of the Communist International – emphasis, ours)

Trotsky: The difference between Negrin and Franco is the difference between rotten [sic] bourgeois democracy and fascism. ... Everywhere and always, where and when revolutionary workers are not powerful enough immediately to overthrow the bourgeois regime, they defend from fascism even the rotten bourgeois democracy, and especially do they defend their own positions inside bourgeois democracy. (From October 1937 Internal Bulletin of the Trotskyists, from an article entitled “Answers to Questions Concerning the Spanish Situation” – our emphasis)

Notice the difference between Lenin’s way of putting the question and Trotsky’s. Lenin condemns those who stand for the defense of capitalist democracy; Trotsky openly declares that the proletariat should defend, mind you, a bourgeois democracy which he admits to be rotten. One can very well understand the logic of Social-Democracy which glorifies capitalist democracy and subsequently defends it. But to admit that capitalist democracy is rotten and then urge the workers to defend it – that is the greatest height that treachery has ever attained!!!

Lenin: Marx in particular, who best of all estimated the importance of the Commune, in his analysis of it showed the exploiting character of bourgeois democracy and of bourgeois parliamentarianism, by which the oppressed classes get the right once every few years to decide which representatives of the possessing classes shall “represent and suppress” the people in parliament. ... All modern bourgeois democratic republics, including the German, which the traitors to socialism, deriding the truth, call a proletarian republic, preserve this state apparatus. In this way it is again and again fully and clearly confirmed that the shouts in defense of “democracy in general” are in fact a defense of the bourgeoisie and of its exploiting privileges.

Trotsky: The workers defend bourgeois democracy, however, not by methods of bourgeois democracy (Peoples Front, electoral blocs, government coalitions, etc.) but by their own methods: that is, by the methods of revolutionary class struggle. Thus by participating in the military struggle against fascism, they continue to defend at the same time their own organizations, their rights, and their interests from the bourgeois democratic government (Ibid)

Again, Trotsky is at odds with Lenin. Bourgeois democracy, which Lenin termed the hidden dictatorship of capital, is going to be defended by Trotsky, by proletarian methods! Imagine! – defending a capitalist dictatorship with “methods of revolutionary class struggle”. Truly, there is no end to Trotsky’s treachery. As to defending the working class organizations by fighting “against fascism” under the leadership of capitalist democratic generals – is this not the line used by Leon Blum in ensnaring the French proletariat to die on the battlefield?

Lenin: The Dreyfus affair in Republican France, **the bloody massacres of strikers by hired gangs armed by the capitalists in the free and democratic republic of America** – these and thousands of similar facts show that truth which the bourgeoisie in vain tries to hide, that is, that in the most democratic republics terror and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie rule in fact, showing themselves openly every time when it appears to the exploiters that the power of capital is trembling. ... The imperialist war of 1914-1918 finally exposed even to the backward workers this true

character of bourgeois democracy, even in the freest republics, as being the character of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. ... In the name of “freedom and equality” the bourgeoisie waged this war, in the name of “freedom and equality” the war profiteers grew rich to an unheard-of extent. No efforts of the yellow Berne International can conceal from the masses the exploiting character of bourgeois freedom, bourgeois equality, bourgeois democracy now exposed to the end.” (Ibid)

Trotsky: Bourgeois democracy decomposes together with capitalism which engendered it. The very possibility of fascist insurrection against bourgeois democracy is a sign that its days are numbered. Thus the “regeneration” of bourgeois democracy cannot be a program of the proletariat. The defense of bourgeois democracy against fascism is only a tactical episode submitted to our line, to overthrow bourgeois democracy and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. (Ibid - Trotsky’s emphasis)

You see, the line is to overthrow bourgeois democracy, so claims Trotsky. And in order to overthrow it, the tactic employed is to defend it!!! Lenin, if he were alive, would laugh in his famous way of loud laughter. But aside from laughing, the workers must expose such Trotskyist reactionary formulas.

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