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# The International Trotskyist Movement and the Postwar Revolutions: An Analysis of its Theoretical and Programmatic (Re)Interpretations (1944–1963)

Marcio Lauria Monteiro

*The theme of this work is the history of the international Trotskyist movement in the first decades following the end of the Second World War (1944–1963). Through the analysis of documents and articles published throughout this period by its different sectors, it was possible to detect a number of (re)interpretations (explicit or not) of the original theoretical and analytical framework of this movement, carried out with the aim of a better understanding of the different revolutions then occurred and to draw intervention programs for them. Those (re)interpretations have generated intense conflicts, being an important element of its increasing fragmentation. Thus, although the history of this movement in the postwar period is not limited to those conflicts, they are fundamental to a better understanding of its current configuration.*

*Keywords: History of Marxism; Fourth International; Trotskyism; Postwar Revolutions*

The Fourth International was founded in 1938, consolidating the abandonment of the external fraction condition maintained by the International Left Opposition towards the Stalinized *Comintern* until 1934, as well as its option of becoming a new international party. However, from its foundation it was in a very fragile situation, since almost all of the leading cadres of the old Opposition were assassinated during the 1930s by the Stalinists, with Leon Trotsky facing the same fate in 1940. Thus, adding a fragile leadership to the tough conditions imposed on the new international by the Second World War, in practice it ceased to exist at the beginning of the 1940s, being rebuilt during the 1944–1948 period thanks to the joint efforts of a new generation of young European militants with those of the US section (the Socialist Workers Party, SWP).

Nonetheless, the way the SWP leadership proceeded in this rebuilding of the Fourth International included several measures that intended to impose on the rest of the organization its problematic predictions of an upcoming profound economic crisis, which would open a revolutionary period. It conducted to the international leadership a handful of unknown militants who agreed with said predictions and, confronted by intense polemics about them, the SWP made some internal purges and, together with its new European allies, modified the statutes of the international organization in order to impose the so-called ‘organism centralism’ (the demand that the members of the leading bodies must behave in a unitary way in front of the rest of the organization) and made several maneuvers in order to guarantee an artificial majority at the Second World Congress (1948).<sup>1</sup>

Despite the seriousness of the 1944–1948 period conflicts, the situation among the Trotskyists ranks became much more complicated when the Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe, the Tito–Stalin split and the War of Korea gave birth to a series of new and profound disagreements, which revolved around themes that became central to the internal debates in the 1950–1960s: the possibility of a ‘revolutionary turn’ on the part of Stalinism and the spreading of ‘peculiar’ revolutions. Those revolutions did not have a socialist revolutionary party at their head; had a national-democratic program (instead of a socialist one); its prevailing social forces were located in the agrarian economy; and had no presence of direct democracy organs (*soviets*).

The fate of Trotskyism throughout the decades under the intense class conflicts that took place at the end of the Second World War was so dramatic that nowadays it is extremely fragmented. It is a fragmentation that is more than organizational, since each existing ‘historical branch’ that claims to be part of this political tradition in practice bases itself on theoretical and programmatic frameworks very different from each other, making it difficult even to assert what Trotskyism is nowadays.

The aim of this paper, which is the result of History MA research, is to cast some light on the long crisis of what can be called, owing to its internal fragmentation and differentiation, the international Trotskyist movement, presenting a mapping of the transformations to which its original theoretical and programmatic framework was subjected in the face of the complex political challenges of the postwar period—particularly the Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe, the Yugoslav, Chinese and Cuban Revolutions and the Algerian independence process. These were transformations which involved a growing differentiation of analysis and positions, based on divergent (re)interpretations of the said bases.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Jenkins, *Where Trotskyism got Lost: The Restoration of European Democracy after the Second World War* (Spokesman’ pamphlet, no. 59, Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1977), <http://tinyurl.com/qb8vluv>, accessed April 2015). Sam Borstein and Al Richardson, *The War and the International: A History of the British Trotskyist Movement, 1937–1949* (London: Socialist Platform, 1986), p. 215. The main critics of those predictions were the Morrow–Goldman fraction of the SWP and the leadership of the British Revolutionary Communist Party, who argued the world economy was heading towards a period of growth and stability and that the European bourgeoisie was preparing a democratic reaction. However, those two sectors disagreed regarding the practical conclusions of those predictions (the first one defended the abandonment of the transitional program and the second did not).

### The Prevailing Narratives and the Question of the ‘Pabloite Revisionism’

It is rare to find works about the history of the Trotskyist movement that deal with its international character. The few that do so are in great part ‘official stories’ of a given group, fulfilling the role of legitimating its existence with regard to the other ones. Frequently those narratives are full of omissions or even distortions, and also do not present enough sources to verify their affirmatives. Notwithstanding, it is precisely the problematic narratives that are frequently used as references for researchers who dedicate themselves to writing the history of various national groups that integrated or integrate the Trotskyist movement (which is the most usual format of the current academic research that has it as its subject).

Regardless of the differences between those narratives, a focus on the 1951–1953 period to explain the beginning of Trotskyism’s crisis and fragmentation tends to prevail, particularly on the divergences regarding the revolutions that took place following the end of the war, with special focus on the struggle around ‘Pabloism’ (or ‘Pabloite revisionism’). It is from the 1953 split that the two main explanations/narrative lines tend to flow, favoring one side or the other.

Michel Pablo, the party name of Michalis Raptis, was one of those militants driven to the international leadership by the SWP, and in 1946 he became the Fourth International’s General Secretary. Indeed the 1951–1953 period involved intense struggles around the new ideas he presented in the new Cold War context, as well as the methods that he applied in order to consolidate them inside the Fourth International, which involved bureaucratic and authoritarian maneuvers based on the new statutes (the imposition of the ‘organism centralism’ to the minorities inside the leading bodies, the interference of the international leadership with the composition of the national ones, the suspension of opponents, the promotion of disloyal factions, etc.).

As will be detailed, believing that an imminent Third World War would force the Stalinists to operate a ‘revolutionary turn’, and comprehending reality as divided between a ‘capitalist world’ and a ‘socialist world’—equated to Stalinism—Pablo defended the reduction of Trotskyism to the role of a left wing of Stalinism, including its dissolution inside Communist Parties, followed by a ‘masking’ of its program (the ‘*sui generis* entry’). Thus, he and his closest allies adopted positions that turned them away from some of the Fourth International’s most basic *raison d’être*—such as the dispute against Social Democracy and Stalinism for the leadership of the proletariat, as a way to carry forward victorious socialist revolutions, and the perspective of a democratic regeneration of the USSR through an anti-Stalinist and pro-socialist ‘political revolution’.<sup>2</sup>

In 1950 the divergences with those ideas and Pablo’s methods of imposing them led to the expulsion of the British section leaders (Ted Grant, Jock Haston and Bill Hunter) and, in 1952, to the split of the French section (the Parti Communiste

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<sup>2</sup> Leon Trotsky, *O programa de transição para a revolução socialista* (São Paulo: Sundermann, 2008 [1938]).

Internationaliste, PCI), the majority having left the Fourth International's ranks.<sup>3</sup> During the period after the Third World Congress (1951), in which the 'Pabloite' ideas were formally approved, the struggle between 'Pabloites' and 'anti-Pabloites' grew to the point of new national sections (or sectors of them) splitting with the international leadership by the end of 1953, and launching a loose-ties public faction called International Committee (IC). The IC did not recognize the authority of Pablo nor the International Secretariat (IS, the Fourth International's highest leading body).

Launched by the US SWP, the IC congregated the French PCI (*La Verité*); the majority of the British group (informally known as The Club, a group active inside the Labour Party in a non-public way); the majority of the Canadian section; the Chinese and Swiss sections; and, afterwards, the Argentinian, Chilean and Peruvian groups united in the Comité Latino Americano del Trotskismo Ortodoxo (posteriorly renamed 'Secretariado', SLATO). The split of the Bolivian section led by Guillermo Lora also became close to the IC, but without formally adhering to it.<sup>4</sup>

Failing in its initial goal of postponing the Fourth World Congress (scheduled to 1954) and removing Pablo from the chair of General Secretariat so the discussions could flow democratically, the IC formally remained a public fraction of the Fourth International until 1963, when part of its groups returned to the former's ranks, originating what became known as the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec). In the face of that, the remaining groups proclaimed the IC as an embryo for a new international party, which would replace the 'degenerated' Fourth International.

According to the narrative line associated with the IS/USec, the postwar reality presented 'non pure' forms of revolutions, which differed from those defended by the Fourth International's strategy and from the conception of socialist transition comprehended in the Permanent Revolution Theory. While the majority of the international leadership made the necessary programmatic adjustments, the narrative goes, the minority answered in a dogmatic and sectarian way, refusing to deal with what differed from its pre-conceived formulas. The return of part of the IC groups to the ranks of the Fourth International in 1963 (creating the USec) is thus seen as a mere 'line correction' on the part of the 'sectarians', as a result of the Algerian (1954–62) and Cuban (1959) revolutionary experiences.

That line is expressed, for example, in the narratives written by Pierre Frank and Daniel Bansaïd, both important IS/USec leaders, whose works consist of an assessment of the history of the Trotskyist movement from its majority's point of view. Despite their minor differences on what were the successes and mistakes regarding the positions and analysis adopted during the 1950–1960s—differences that flow from USec's 1980s turn (its explicit adherence to a strategy of socialist transition through

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<sup>3</sup> The two groups kept the name 'PCI' for few years after the split, differentiating themselves through their respective newspapers names: the majority kept *La Verité*, while the minority launched *La Verité des travailleurs*.

<sup>4</sup> Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929–1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 325.

reforms)—they remain as true ‘official stories’, disseminated by different groups linked to that sector of the Trotskyist movement.<sup>5</sup>

However, according to the narrative line associated with groups historically linked to the IC (including some of those who took part in the 1963 reunification, but later left the USec), the adaptations made by the majority of the international leadership were a harmful ‘revisionism’, which diluted the importance of the Marxist party as the conscious element necessary to the triumph of the socialist revolution and led them to a series of ‘opportunist capitulations’. That revisionism is frequently called ‘Pabloism’ and, the narrative goes on, was imposed upon the Fourth International through bureaucratic maneuvers and authoritarian interferences with the life of the national sections—thus forcing the split of those who were critical to it, as a way to carry on their oppositionist political struggle. Therefore the return of part of the IC’s groups in 1963, in order to form the USec, is seen as a late ‘capitulation’ to the ‘Pabloite revisionism’.

That line is expressed, for example, in the narrative written by David North, which constitutes an assessment of the history of the Trotskyist movement since the point of view of the IC sector that was originally associated with its British group, which became the dominant one after 1963, remaining so until the mid-1980s. It is also partially expressed in narratives associated with groups which were part of the IC at a given moment, such as the one written by Jean-Jacques Marie, who is the main historian of the ‘Lambertite’ tradition, and those written by Mercedes Petit and Alicia Sagra, both associated with the ‘Morenoite’ tradition.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth noting that there are other narrative lines of lower visibility, such as the one associated with Tony Cliff’s tradition (the party name of Yagel Gluckstein) and the *International Socialism* journal. According to its explanation, the origin of the Trotskyist movement crisis is rooted in the dogmatic adhesion to certain prognoses made by Trotsky (particularly the imminence of a world revolution) and, especially, to his characterization of the USSR as a ‘workers’ state’ (bureaucratically degenerated), when it was actually, the explanation goes on, a ‘state capitalism’ social formation. The application of that category to the social formation originated by the postwar revolutions led to a capitulation to Stalinism and to an abandonment of the Marxian notion of social revolution as ‘proletariat self-emancipation’, so claims this narrative.

Therefore, both the IS/USec and the IC were analytically and programmatically lost owing to their adherence to prewar Trotskyism. Frequently the ‘Cliffite’ tradition presents itself more as a ‘return’ to Marxism than as Trotskyist. This narrative line is expressed, for example, in the writings of Cliff himself and that of the current

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Bensaid, *Os trotskismos* (Lisboa: Combate, 2008 [2002]). Pierre Frank, *Fourth International - The Long March of the Trotskyists* (London: Ink Links, 1979 [1969]).

<sup>6</sup> David North, *The Heritage We Defend: A Contribution to the History of the Fourth International* (London: Paperback, 1988). Jean-Jacques Marie, *O Trotskismo* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1990 [1977]). Mercedes Petit, *Apuntes para la historia del trotskismo (de 1938 a 1964)* ([S.n]: [Buenos Aires], 1980 [1963]). Alicia Sagra, *História das Internacionais Socialistas* (São Paulo: Sundermann, 2005).

leader in the nowadays main ‘Cliffite’ group, the British SWP (not to be confused with the US SWP), Alex Callinicos.<sup>7</sup>

Although all those narrative lines contain some elements of truth about the disputes that led to the Trotskyist movement’s growing fragmentation, they are too narrow and carry too many omissions and distortions. Owing to time and space limitations, it will not be possible to develop a detailed discussion about them, but it can be highlighted that what all of them have in common and what is indeed correct is the acknowledgment of the centrality of the postwar revolutions in that movement’s crisis, since their peculiarities escaped from the ‘rule’ according to the Permanent Revolution Theory.

As the USec sees itself as the Fourth International’s direct continuation, no major effort has been made by those associated with it to explain what happened to the Trotskyist movement in the postwar period, seeing only a history of disperse ‘sectarian’ splits. On the other hand, its critics, faced with the task of explaining why the Trotskyism ‘got lost’, produced myriad articles and brochures on the subject.

Yet the narrative line associated to the IC’s origins has the main limitation of an excessive focus on the ‘Pabloite revisionism’ question. Although Pablo’s more particular ideas were crucial to the struggles that led to the 1953 split, they had a limited impact in the long run. Already in mid-1954, with the cooling down of the highly tense international polarization that prevailed between the US and the USSR in the previous years and, consequently, also the radical tone of some Communist Parties (CPs) around the world, Pablo saw himself in difficulties in sustaining his predictions of an imminent Third World War and a ‘revolutionary turn’ on the part of Stalinism.<sup>8</sup> Moreover (and more relevant), the analysis and positions sketched out by many ‘anti-Pabloites’ had a series of fundamental elements in common with those denounced as ‘revisionists’.

With those facts in mind, it is problematic to narrow Trotskyism’s crisis down to the 1951–1953 struggles—as if Pablo and his closest supporters were the only ones who made a profound reinterpretation of the movement’s original theoretical and programmatic framework in face of the complex political challenges of the postwar period, or as if their adversaries were merely ‘sectarians’ who did not understand that conjuncture. In reality it was much more complex than that.

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<sup>7</sup> Tony Cliff, *Trotskyism After Trotsky. The Origins of the International Socialists* (London: Bookmarks, 1999). Alex Callinicos, *Trotskyism* (London: Open University Press, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> Pablo even turned against his closest supporters when they carried to the Fourth World Congress (1954) what they saw as the logical conclusion of his ideas and proposed a complete dissolution of the Fourth International and a definite entry on the CPs. Those supporters were the Cochran–Clarke–Bartel faction, expelled from the US SWP at the end of 1953, a handful of Canadian and British militants (also expelled from their respective groups and respectively led by Murray Downson and John Lawrence), as well as a minority sector within the French PCI (*La Vérité des travailleurs*), led by Michelle Mestre and located on the Lyon cell. After being defeated at that Congress, they left the international and went on to fulfill the entry on the CPs. Fred Feldman, ‘Section I: The Parity Commission and Peng Shu Tse’s “Pabloism Reviewed”’ in Tim Wohlforth and Fred Feldman (eds) *Toward a History of the Fourth International*, Part 7, Volume 1, Education for Socialists Series (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), p. 4.

The careful study of postwar Trotskyism's history shows that a profound theoretical and analytical confusion spread among Trotskyists, who were surprised by the vitality achieved by Stalinism among the European masses by the end of the war, by the Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe and by the development of some revolutionary processes that expropriated politically and economically the bourgeoisie and gave birth to new non-capitalist social formations without having the leadership parties characterized as revolutionaries. Thus in order to obtain a better understanding of this movement's crisis, one must go beyond the conflict around Pablo's more particular ideas.

It is necessary to detect those elements which, integrating the 'core' of those ideas, actually originated them and survived beyond them through the following decades, when Pablo's more immediate predictions were proven wrong. In other words, it is necessary to understand the (re)interpretations made by Pablo and others regarding the more central aspects of the Trotskyist movement's original framework as a way to explain new and complex class struggle phenomena.

In the same way, one must go beyond the characterization of his adversaries as mere opponents of his more immediate ideas and understand how they also made profound (re)interpretations of the movement's original theoretical and programmatic framework. Without proceeding in this way it is impossible to comprehend how so many different 'Trotskyisms' originated during the second half of the 20th century.

The conclusion reached through the analysis of documents and articles published throughout the 1944–1963 period—from the reorganization of the Fourth International in the immediate postwar period to the 1953 split and to the international reconfiguration that occurred in 1963—by the Fourth International's leading bodies and many of its national sections, as well as by some internal factions and also international splits, is that in reality both sides operated (*re*)interpretations of central aspects of the said framework as a way to understand and take up a position in the face of the revolutions then taking place, which had important peculiarities if compared with what was expected from the Permanent Revolution Theory, Trotskyism's central pillar.

In many aspects, those sides shared certain reinterpretations, yet reached different practical conclusions. Thus in order to better comprehend why the Trotskyist movement reached its current high level of fragmentation and internal differentiation, it is necessary to map its different analyses and debates regarding the postwar revolutions.

Analyses and debates that dealt mainly with the characterization of the political force ahead of the victorious revolutions of the period (Stalinism)—if it was counter-revolutionary 'through and through'; if it had a 'dual nature'; if it had become 'objectively revolutionary' under the Cold War conjuncture. Also with the meaning of the *Permanent Revolution Theory*—if a postulate on the impossibility of socialist revolutions where the Trotskyist was not the political agent and the proletariat the social agent; if a theory which needed to be 'updated' or 'correct' under the light of those events. And equally with *transition to socialism*—if it is possible (and/or necessary) the existence of 'intermediary' regimes, of transition between capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.



As important as the immediate postwar polemics among Trotskyists are, were the debates around those three points, which took place during the 1948–1963 period, that shaped in a more fundamental way its current main ‘historical branches’. Throughout the 1960–1970s other important discussions also took place, as on the viability of the ‘armed way’ (guerrilla), but in great part the core of those ‘branches’ was already determined by the analysis they delineated during the previous years. The same can be said about how they analyzed and answered the counterrevolutions that happened in the ‘Soviet bloc’ at the end of the century (the capitalist restorations).

Notwithstanding this, it must be highlighted that it is also impossible to achieve a refined understanding of the international Trotskyist movement’s crisis without a *social* history approach. Thus it is necessary to acknowledge that the present paper does not explain this crisis as a whole, being only a *contribution* to this task, which remains to be fulfilled. To the presented mapping and systematization of the different (re)interpretations of the Fourth International’s original theoretical and programmatic framework made under the impact of the postwar revolutions it is also necessary to add a detailed analysis of the different pressures to which (at least) the main national sections were subjected to during the postwar period, as a way to better explain what originated the said (re)interpretations. However, that is a task that will hardly be achieved through an individual work. It actually needs to be built into an agenda for the cooperation of different researchers.

### **The Trotskyan Theoretical and Programmatic Framework and the Postwar Revolutions’ Peculiarities**

The Permanent Revolution Theory—developed by Trotsky from both Marx’s fragmentary elaborations made after the 1848 revolutionary upsurge and his own on the Russian (1905 and 1917) and Chinese (1925–27) Revolutions—was the main pillar of the Fourth International. It pointed out the incapability of the peripheral bourgeoisie of making a national-democratic revolution—owing to its late entry into the world market, attached to the imperialist capitals and dependent on them—and to the impossibility of the peasantry fulfilling an independent political role—since it is a heterogeneous class, too disperse and atomized. Thus it pointed out the social centrality of the proletariat (*social agent*), which should fulfill the ‘bourgeois-democratic’ tasks through a revolutionary process that organically linked them to the ‘socialist’ ones—deemed ‘mature’ owing their worldwide integration under the capitalist global market. However, for that to happen, the political leadership of a Marxist party would be essential, as the conscious element of the revolution (*political agent*).<sup>9</sup>

Although Trotsky raised the possibility that, ‘under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure,

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<sup>9</sup> Leon Trotsky, ‘A revolução permanente’, in *A teoria da revolução permanente* (São Paulo: Sundermann, 2011 [1929]), pp. 131–318. Leon Trotsky, ‘Balanço e perspectivas’, in *ibid.* ([1906]), pp. 25–130.

etc.), the petty bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie',<sup>10</sup> he continued to emphasize the central importance of the social protagonism of the proletariat and the political protagonism of the Marxist party—even in face of such exceptional possibilities, which should not be seen as models. In his own words, 'Everything depends on the proletariat, i.e., chiefly on its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership'.<sup>11</sup>

Trotsky dealt yet with another exceptional possibility of social transformation, where the role of the social agent according to his theory would also be relativized in practice (but would remain necessary). In the context of Poland's division between Germany and USSR he raised the possibility of a 'military-bureaucratic' expansion of the Soviet social formation to its neighboring regions, which would lead to the expropriation of the native bourgeoisie of those countries 'to bring the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the regime of the USSR'.<sup>12</sup> However, he warned that the Fourth International's 'primary political criteria' should not be the change in property relations, 'but rather the change in the consciousness and organization of the world proletariat'—criteria under which this 'military-bureaucratic' way showed Stalinism's counterrevolutionary character.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of the revolutionary processes that took place in the postwar period happened on the periphery of the capitalism system, where the urban proletariat was still small—as a reflex of incipient industrialization—and where a mass of rural wage earners, frequently mixed with the peasantry's poorer strata, still formed the majority of the population. Everything began as processes with national-democratic agendas, instead of socialist ones. And, despite their particularities, all of them shared a series of peculiarities that contrasted with the Permanent Revolution Theory, although they confirmed it in its more broader aspects.

They had the rural labor force as their main social agent, while only in a minority of cases did the urban proletariat play a role in the overthrow of the bourgeois power (and even on those cases it was only a minor role). That rural force was heterogeneously constituted by the rural proletariat, small land-owner producers and a vast mass of tenant producers and ex-peasants recently expropriated and socially uprooted owing the expansion of market relations in the countryside.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Trotsky, *O programa de transição*, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Leon Trotsky, 'A URSS na Guerra', in *Em defesa do marxismo* (São Paulo: Sundermann, 2011 [1939]), p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> For a debate on this rural labor force and its role in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century revolutions: Hamza Alavi, 'Peasants and Revolution', in Ralph Miliband and John Saville (eds) *The Socialist Register* (London: The Merlin Press, 1965), pp. 241–277. James Petras, 'Socialist Revolutions and their Class Components', *New Left Review*, 111 (September/October 1978), pp. 37–64. James Petras, 'Toward a Theory of Twentieth Century Socialist Revolutions', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 3 (1978), pp. 167–195. Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). Although not convergent in all their conclusions, those analysis are relevant for the level of detail in which they deal with the characterization of that labor force and for the mapping of each of its sectors' mobilizations and demands.

They had as political agents organizations that did not defend in their strategies anything beyond the national-democratic program for which these social agents mobilized. The political agents were in some cases Communist Parties, the stagist logic of which made them assign a 'bourgeois-democratic' character to the revolutions on the capitalist periphery, instead of putting forward a socialist program; in other cases they were groups that did not even proclaim formal adherence to socialist ideas and to the centrality of the proletariat as the revolutionary agent, having a nationalist character and a strong urban petit-bourgeois *intelligentsia* composition among their ranks and leadership (as was the case in the Cuban Revolution).

Moreover, those processes did not lead to the creation of democratic organs of political power (*soviet*). Where they came into being at some point, they were violently suppressed by the processes leadership (as in Vietnam) or did not possess real power (as in Yugoslavia and Cuba, where they were created vertically from the top down).

Finally, those processes that were not crushed in the very beginning led to the formation of coalition governments with representatives of the native bourgeoisie in the immediate moment after the destruction of the bourgeois state, which left untouched the juridical defense of private property. However, still (and here lies the confirmation of Permanent Revolution Theory's broader aspects) those processes that indeed accomplished (some of) the national-democratic tasks they aimed for—a minority of the cases—could only succeed through breaking the class-collaboration coalitions and expropriating the native and imperialist capitals, finishing with capitalism and originating social formations the structural aspects of which, as well as political regimes, were very similar to those of the USSR. It was only at this second moment that these processes' leaderships adopted socialist speeches, instead of national-democratic or nationalist ones.

Such exceptional cases happened in Yugoslavia (1944–1948), Albania (1944–1945, ignored by the Trotskyists at the time), China (1949–1953), North Korea (1946–1949), Vietnam (1950–1951 and 1975), Cuba (1959–1960) and Laos (1975). To this should be added the Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe at the end of the war (1944–1948), which transformed the social relations of the region in a military-bureaucratic fashion, through the action of the Red Army (renamed 'Soviet Army' in 1946).<sup>15</sup> The following sections present a mapping of how the different sectors of the international Trotskyist movement reacted to that events (those located in the 1944–1964 period) and which were the (re)interpretations they operated in order to analyze, explain and take positions regarding them.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This synthesis is a result of a critical reading of several studies, among which are the ones mentioned in the previous footnote and Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009). S. Sándor John, *Bolivia's Radical Tradition: Permanent Revolution in the Andes* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2009). John Lister, *Cuba. Radical Face of Stalinism* (London: Left View, 1985). S. A. Smith, *Revolution and the People in Russia and China. A Comparative History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Mustafa Yazbeck. *A Revolução Argelina* (São Paulo: Unesp, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> For a more detailed case-by-case analysis of how these (re)interpretations were developed, refer to Chapters 3–6 plus the Appendix of the original study: Marcio Antonio Lauria de Moraes Monteiro, 'O movimento

## The Majority: Gradual Transition Towards Socialism and Stalinism's Auto Reform

Regarding the majority sector of the Trotskyist movement—the IS and the USec, led by Pablo, Ernest Mandel, Pierre Frank and Livio Maitan during the period considered here, but not always conforming to a united bloc—the main analysis, explanations and positions developed for those events were based on the introduction in the movement's original theoretical and programmatic framework of the notion that a *gradual transition* was possible between capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat and that such a transition could be made by non-Marxist political agents.

Initially (during the 1944–1948 period), the Fourth International's leadership, based on a characterization that Stalinism was *intrinsically counterrevolutionary*, denied that Eastern Europe ceased to be capitalist, the Second World Congress thesis (1948) having stated that said region had a 'fundamentally capitalist structure', its states being *bourgeois* ones and their regimes Bonapartists 'in an extreme fashion'.<sup>17</sup> However, since the 1946 International Conference that region was regarded as passing through a *gradual* change of its social relations, which was being conducted 'bureaucratically from above, without calling for the conquest of power by the proletariat', through a 'cold' integration to the Soviet Union—processes that were named *structural assimilation*.<sup>18</sup>

This thesis of a gradual change still to be completed was altered only by mid-1950, under the enthusiasm that took place in the Fourth International's ranks with the 'Tito–Stalin split'.<sup>19</sup> For the majority of the International Executive Committee (IEC, the deliberative body of which the IS was the operative organ), especially Pablo, evaluated that this split meant that the Yugoslav CP had ceased to be a Stalinist party and had become a 'left centrist' one, on the road to becoming revolutionary.

After an intense dispute inside the international leadership, particularly between Pablo (who became favorable to changing Eastern Europe's characterization) and Ernest Mandel (another militant conducted to the leadership by the SWP, who maintained his evaluation of the incompleteness of the 'structural assimilation' processes), the IEC's 8<sup>th</sup> Plenum (April 1950) approved the characterization of Yugoslavia as a *workers' state* and a *dictatorship of the proletariat*. The following 9<sup>th</sup> Plenum

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trotskista internacional e as revoluções do pós-guerra: uma análise de suas (re)leituras teóricas e programáticas (1944–63'). History MA dissertation, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> 'The USSR and Stalinism', *Fourth International* [New York/SWP], IX:4 (June 1948), pp. 121–123.

<sup>18</sup> 'The New Imperialist Peace and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International', *Fourth International* [New York/SWP] VII:67 (June 1946), p. 172.

<sup>19</sup> This enthusiasm was expressed on the salutation letters sent by the IS to the Yugoslav CP's conference and on the union and youth brigades sent to the country by the French section (the US section only did not do the same because the government prohibited it at the last moment) and also on the publishing of a newspaper together with the Yugoslav embassy in Paris. This changed in 1950 after Yugoslavia supported the US intervention in Korea. Jan Norden, *Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International. The Evolution of Pabloite Liquidationism*, Prometheus Research Series no. 4 (New York: Prometheus Research Library, 1993), pp. 5–33.

(November 1950) approved a resolution recognizing the destruction of capitalism in Eastern Europe as a whole and characterizing the region's other social formations as *bureaucratically deformed workers states*.<sup>20</sup>

However, the final explanation for Eastern Europe's transformation incorporated the gradualist thesis of 'structural assimilation', stating that it occurred throughout the 1944–1948 period. Similarly, an intermediary period between capitalism and dictatorship of the proletariat was stated to have existed in Yugoslavia, between 1944 and the 1948 split with Moscow and with the bourgeois representatives at the provisional government.<sup>21</sup>

Also taking in consideration the Chinese Revolution experience, which led the local CP to power in 1949, the international leadership came to face a CP that split with Moscow and/or went beyond its national-reformist program as ceasing to be *counter-revolutionary* and becoming *centrist*, on the way to turning revolutionary—having thus to be *critically supported*.<sup>22</sup> This logic was later expanded to petit-bourgeois nationalist groups with mass influence, as with the Algerian (1954–1962) and Cuban (1959) cases. Although the Bolivian Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) that took power with the 1952 (incomplete) revolution was clearly a bourgeois formation, yet with a sector that had strong union influence, it was so characterized by the international leadership as to justify the support of the local section to its government.

To analytically support such positions, Pablo/Mandel and the majority sector of the international leadership came up with a reinterpretation of the 'workers' peasant government' slogan to explain the coalition governments with bourgeois representatives that were formed on the first moment of such revolutionary processes, using it to designate a 'dual power' *inside the state* and to point as a task for Trotskyists to critically support such governments with the perspective of 'pushing' them towards the destruction of capitalism and the formation of workers' states.<sup>23</sup>

Thus they transformed what was an agitation slogan before (traditionally used within Bolshevik and Trotskyist lexicon as a synonym for dictatorship of the proletariat<sup>24</sup>) into a concept for *transitional regimes* between capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, which could advance towards the expropriation of the bourgeoisie or retreat to the consolidation of that class's power. It was used as a basis to give political support to different governments, as in the case of the 1952 Bolivian Revolution, where the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (the Fourth International's local section) put its

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> 'Resolution on the Crisis of Stalinism and the Developments of the Yugoslave [sic] Revolution', *International Information Bulletin* (September 1950). 'Class Nature of Eastern Europe', *Fourth International* [New York/SWP] 12:6 (November–December 1951).

<sup>22</sup> 'The Yugoslav Revolution', *Fourth International* [New York/SWP] 12:6 (November–December 1951). 'The Third Chinese Revolution. A Resolution of the Fourth International', *Fourth International* [New York/SWP] 13:4 (July–August 1952).

<sup>23</sup> Same sources as previous footnote.

<sup>24</sup> Trotsky, *O programa de transição*, op. cit., p. 51. M. Pablo [Michalis Raptis], 'On the Slogan of "Workers and Farmer's Government"', *Fourth International* [New York/SWP] 8:2 (February 1947).

mass influence inside the Central Obrera Boliviana at the service of the MNR's 'left wing', with disastrous results,<sup>25</sup> or during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), where support was given to the 'National Liberation Front' (FLN) and its government.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, regarding the regimes originating from the Yugoslav and Chinese processes, the majority denied that there was a qualitative absence of democracy in them, seeing only 'bureaucratic deformations' that could be reformed by the respective leaderships, since they were subjected to left-wing pressures—hence that sector did not defend the task of *political revolution*. In this way the concept of a *workers' state* was used to characterize them, denying that those 'bureaucratic deformations' meant an absence of democracy and seeing no need for an independent Trotskyist party (at best they conceived the creation of a 'leftwing faction' inside the local CPs).<sup>27</sup> The same logic, based on the supposed possibility of an 'auto reform' of Stalinism, was later extended to the Cuban case (1959).<sup>28</sup>

At last, although the sector acknowledged the preponderance of the rural labor force in these three cases (simplistically seen as the 'peasantry'), it saw them pure and simply as proletarian revolutions, which had 'confirmed' the Permanent Revolution Theory in all its scope, which indicated that there was no qualitative difference between the goals aimed by the Trotskyists and those actually achieved. In this way those processes were taken as models, as an easier way to socialism—despite their numerical exceptionality if taking in consideration various others explosive situations that took place during the same period and despite the absence of proletarian democracy and the internationalist orientation of the regimes they originated.

It must also be highlighted that during a certain period (1951–1954) Pablo's more particular analysis prevailed among the majority of the international leadership, according to which an imminent Third World War would force Stalinism to operate a 'revolutionary turn' worldwide in order to assure the survival of the Soviet bureaucracy—which, moreover, supposedly would be gradually dissolved after a world revolution, as a direct product of the productive forces' development. From this, Pablo derived the perspective that Trotskyism's role should be the one of a 'left wing' of this 'objectively revolutionary' Stalinism, including having to enter the CPs by masking parts of its program and its own Trotskyist identity (the so-called '*sui generis* entry', applied with disastrous results in places such as China).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> José Villa, 'A Revolution Betrayed. The POR and the Fourth International in the Bolivian Revolution' [1992], Marxist Internet Archive, <http://tinyurl.com/zkhg4wq>. Sándor John, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Patrick O'Daniel [Sherry Mangan], 'The Truth about the Algerian Revolution: An Open Letter to The Militant', *Fourth International* [SI] no. 2 (Spring 1958). 'Résolution du Secrétariat International sur la situation en Algérie', *Quatrième Internationale* [SI] 20:19 (December 1962).

<sup>27</sup> Same sources as footnote 22.

<sup>28</sup> 'La révolution cubaine', *Quatrième Internationale* [Paris/IS] 18:10 (July 1960).

<sup>29</sup> M. Pablo [Michalis Raptis], 'Where are we Going?', *International Information Bulletin* [New York/SWP] (May 1951). M. Pablo [Michalis Raptis], 'On the Duration and the Nature of the Period of Transition from Capitalism to Socialism', *International Information Bulletin* [New York/SWP] (July 1951). M. Pablo [Michalis Raptis], 'The Building of the Revolutionary Party', *International Information Bulletin* [New York/SWP] (June 1952).

Although these more particular ideas of Pablo, frequently referred to as ‘Pabloite revisionism’, were short-lived (owing to the mid-1950s *détente*, as mentioned above), they shared the basic core of the (re)interpretations made by this majority sector of the Trotskyist movement. This core was characterized by the notion that ‘blunt’ political agents (Stalinists or centrists) could be driven to lead a socialist revolution if under pressure of certain objective conditions, putting on the Trotskyists the role of ‘guiding’ and ‘pushing’ them to the left, instead of trying to constitute themselves as a mass alternative leadership; and that the postwar workers states’ bureaucracies could be auto reformed towards a genuine proletarian democracy.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, if one cannot speak of ‘Pabloism’ to designate in a precise way this majority sector (since Pablo’s more particular ideas were short-lived), certainly it can be said that it made a (re)interpretation of some of the most central aspects of pre-war Trotskyism, originating a new strategy based on the perspective that ‘blunt’ political agents that rose to the power through mass mobilizations formed ‘Workers and Peasants Governments’ and could be ‘pushed’ to create workers states, Trotskyism being reduced to a secondary role and not aiming anymore the Fourth International’s original main goal, which could be the solution to the proletariat’s ‘crisis of leadership’.

### The ‘Anti-Pabloites’ and the Absence of Alternative Analysis

Fighting against that majority sector were the self-named ‘orthodox Trotskyists’, or ‘anti-Pabloites’—the groups that originally created the International Committee: the US SWP, the British Socialist Labour League (SLL—the name taken by The Club for a more public activity inside the Labour Party, but which was quickly expelled) and the French PCI—*La Verité* and the Secretariado Latinoamericano del Trotskismo Ortodoxo (SLATO, led by ‘Nahuel Moreno’, Hugo Bressano’s party name). Although splitting with those they saw as ‘revisionists’, this sector kept the same analysis developed by them to explain Eastern Europe’s transformation and the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions—CPs that ceased being Stalinists for going beyond their national-reformist program; the existence of transitional regimes between capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat; and the possibility of successful socialist revolutions led by ‘blunt’ political agents and by non-proletarian social agents. They also momentarily shared the enthusiasm towards Tito and the Yugoslav CP.

Therefore they did not contest the perspective of a possible gradual social transformation led by non-Marxists, but they did denounce what they saw as a ‘liquidationism’ from the part of the ‘Pabloites’ in relation to Stalinism, although they did it late, on the 1953 split context. In that sense they opposed the ‘*sui generis* entry’ proposal

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<sup>30</sup> Although time limitations did not allow a detailed analysis of the Trotskyist movement’s reaction to the pro-democratic and anti-Stalinist revolts that took place in some of the ‘Soviet bloc’ countries during the 1950–1960s, it must be highlighted that this notion of an ‘auto reform’ of Stalinism led the majority sector of the international leadership to see the 1953 Eastern Berlin revolt as something that would speed up this process, discarding the necessity of it becoming a political revolution and removing Stalinism from power. ‘Against Pabloite Revisionism’, *Fourth International* [New York/SWP] 14: 5 (September–October 1953).



and refused to give ‘critical support’ to the Chinese and Yugoslav governments, arguing instead the need for a political revolution that could originate a proletarian democracy in what they characterized as being *bureaucratically deformed workers states*.<sup>31</sup>

However, as they did not produce alternative analysis for what happened in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China, some of those groups—such as the SWP and the SLATO—reached similar conclusions to those of the IS in face of processes such as the Algerian—first critically supporting the ‘Algerian Nationalist Movement’ (MNA) and after the FLN—and the Cuban—critically supporting Fidel Castro’s *Movimiento 26 de Julio* (M26J). They saw those groups as capable of building socialism through the formation of ‘Workers and Peasants Governments’ that would be later transformed into workers states.<sup>32</sup> Therefore they reunified with the IS in 1963, with which they formed the USec.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding the SWP, it went further under Joseph Hansen’s leadership, becoming more and more ‘Castroite’, in the sense that its defense of the Cuban Revolution and the Castroite regime became its new gravitational center, to the point that it gradually abandoned the defense of a Trotskyist international and even of Trotskyism itself. During the first half of the 1980s, then under Jack Barnes’s leadership, the SWP formally abandoned the Permanent Revolution Theory and substituted it for the strategic perspective of building ‘*Workers Peasant Governments*’ around the globe as a necessary first step towards the building of a dictatorship of the proletariat, as well as starting campaigning for a new international party led by Castroite forces.<sup>34</sup>

Regarding the SLATO, Nahuel Moreno elaborated a synthesis that was presented as a revision/update of the Permanent Revolution Theory and which was based on a two-stage-revolution strategy—a first ‘unconscious’ stage (named ‘February’) and a second ‘consciously socialist’ stage (named ‘October’). The first stage would have a national-democratic program and would lead to the formation of coalition governments with representatives of the native bourgeoisie, during which Trotskyists should support the process’s ‘unconsciously socialist’ leaderships and even merge with them in the form of a ‘Revolutionary United Front’, aiming at making them go beyond their program and split with the bourgeoisie, then passing into the second (socialist) stage.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Favre [Marcel Bleibtreau], ‘Where is Comrade Pablo Going?’, in Tim Wohlforth and Fred Feldman (eds) *Toward a History of the Fourth International*. Part 3, Volume 1. Education for Socialists Series (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974 [1952]). ‘The Third Chinese Revolution and its Aftermath’, *The Chinese Revolution and its Development*. Education for Socialists Series (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1969 [1955]). James P. Cannon, ‘A Letter to Trotskyists Throughout the World’, *The Militant* [New York/SWP] (November 1953).

<sup>32</sup> Philip Magri [Shane Mage], ‘Revolutionary Socialism and the Split in the Algerian Nationalist Movement. Reply to O’Daniel’, *Discussion Bulletin* [New York/SWP] 19: 2 (April 1958). ‘Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution’, *Discussion Bulletin* [New York/SWP] 22:1 (February 1961). Nahuel Moreno [Hugo Bressano], *La revolución Latinoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Palabra Obrera, 1962).

<sup>33</sup> ‘The Dynamics of World Revolution Today’, *Fourth International* [IS] no. 17 (October–December, 1963).

<sup>34</sup> Jack Barnes, *Their Trotsky and Ours* (New York: Pathfinder, 2002 [1983]).

<sup>35</sup> Nahuel Moreno [Hugo Bressano], ‘Tesis Sobre el Frente Único Revolucionario’, in *Escritos sobre la revolución política* ([1958]), <http://tinyurl.com/zpck4tp>. Nahuel Moreno [Hugo Bressano], *La revolución*



On the other hand, although other IC groups—such as the British SLL (led by Gerry Healy, Michael Banda and Cliff Slaughter) and the French PCI—*La Verité* (led by Stéphane Just and Pierre Lambert)—did not develop alternative analyses to substitute for those inherited from the 1944–1953 period either, and although they supported the MNA as a supposed ‘socialist wing’ of the Algerian Revolution,<sup>36</sup> in the face of the Cuban case they counterpoised themselves to what was seen as a ‘capitulation’ to the M26J on the part of the SWP/SLATO/IS. With the reunification of IC sectors with the IS, those groups started arguing that the Permanent Revolution Theory meant that a revolution could only occur under the leadership of a revolutionary (Trotskyist) party.

However, the absence of alternative explanations for the gradualist analysis of the previous revolutionary processes led them into serious difficulties in explaining the Cuban case, when they denied that any qualitative social change occurred and stated that the country remained a *capitalist* social formation. The M26J government was thus characterized by the SLL as a ‘Bonapartist capitalist dictatorship’ and by the PCI as a ‘phantom bourgeois state’—the PCI later modified this characterization almost two decades later (1979) to ‘deformed workers state’, the origin of which was explained through the gradualist notion contained in the new ‘Workers and Peasants Government’ concept.<sup>37</sup>

### The Alternative Analyses of Some Forgotten ‘Anti-Pabloites’

The groups mentioned above were not the only members of the not very homogeneous ‘orthodox Trotskyists’/‘anti-Pabloites’, since some minority sectors—frequently ignored by History—presented not only different positions, but also alternative analyses for the postwar revolutions. This was the case for the British Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), the Fourth International’s only sector that, still in the 1940s, contested first Eastern Europe’s characterization as being capitalism and later the new gradualist thesis and reinterpretations developed to explain it and Yugoslavia’s transformation. The RCP also criticized the acritical support given to Tito. After

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*Latinoamericana*. Later, during the 1980s, Moreno added to this revision/update the notion of ‘triumphant democratic revolution’, according to which a regime change within a bourgeois state (from a military dictatorship to a parliamentary democracy, for example) constituted a ‘February revolution’ and, consequently, could be the antechamber of the socialist revolution. Such a process could have as its social agent even the liberal bourgeoisie and as its political agent even high-echelon members of the bourgeois military apparatus (as with General Bignone, in the 1983 Argentinian transition). Nahuel Moreno [Hugo Bressano], ‘Argentina, una revolución democrática triunfante’, in *Escuela de cuadros Argentina 1984* (Buenos Aires: Crux, 1992 [1983]). Nahuel Moreno [Hugo Bressano], ‘Teoría de la revolución’, in *Escuela de cuadros Argentina* ([1984]).

<sup>36</sup> Michael Banda, ‘Marxism and the Algerian Revolution’, *Labour Review* [London/‘The Club’] 3:2 (March–April 1958).

<sup>37</sup> ‘Position of the French Section of the International Committee on the Cuban Question’, *International Information Bulletin* [New York/SWP] (April 1963 [1961]). ‘Opportunism and Empiricism’, in Cliff Slaughter (ed.) *Trotskyism versus Revisionism. A Documentary History. Volume 4. The International Committee Against Liquidationism* (London: New Park Publications, 1974 [1963]). Lister, op. cit, p. 117.

years of harsh battles with the international leadership, which demanded a ‘deep entry’ into the Labour Party and even split the RCP to achieve it (the origins of The Club), this group was dissolved in 1949 and became part of The Club inside the Labour Party, having its original leadership expelled the following year.

This was also the case for two factions that appeared inside the US SWP in different moments, the Vern-Ryan Tendency (from Los Angeles branch) and the Revolutionary Tendency (from New York and San Francisco’s Bay Area branches), which contested the party leadership’s (James Cannon, Joseph Hansen, Murry Weiss, Farrel Dobbs) ‘orthodox’ and ‘anti-Pabloite’ credentials. The first one between 1950–1954, criticized the gradualist thesis used to explain the Eastern European, Yugoslavian and Chinese processes and the political support given to the leaderships of the latter two, as well as opposing the line for the Bolivian Revolution. The second between 1961 and 1963, criticized the political support given to the Cuban M26J, the non-critical rapprochement with the IS and the line of not competing for the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement and giving political support to its leaders.

As they did not coexist, what can be said is that those groups had some central positions in common, some of them even ‘inherited’ from those who preceded them—positions that presented analyses which were different from those of both the majority Trotskyists from the IS/Usec and those who supposedly fought their ‘revisionism’ from an ‘orthodox’ standpoint (the SLL, the PCI and the SWP).<sup>38</sup>

Both the RCP and the Vern-Ryan Tendency criticized the idea that Stalinism was *intrinsically counterrevolutionary*, pointing out that it was a unilateral approach and that it was the source of the capitulation of the ‘Pabloites’ to that political force (by assuming that a CP that leads revolutions ceases being counterrevolutionary) and the supposed ‘orthodox’ denial of any social change made by revolutions led by it (by assuming to be impossible a revolution without Marxists leading it). Similarly, the Revolutionary Tendency criticized those ‘orthodox’ who remaining inside the IC after 1963 for denying the qualitative social changes brought about by the Cuban Revolution.

As an alternative, they retrieved Trotsky’s analysis about the dual character of the soviet bureaucracy to explain what happened in Eastern Europe—having the Vern-Ryan Tendency extended that characterization to Stalinism also in the international plane to explain the Yugoslav and Chinese Revolutions, considering it *centrist*, while the Revolutionary Tendency simply pointed out the *exceptional possibility* of a

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<sup>38</sup> The sources to be listed here are numerous, but the central ones are: ‘Amendments aux thèses sur La Russie et l’Europe Orientale soumis par le R.C.P. de Grande-Bretagne’, *Bulletin Interieur du Secretariat Internationale* [Paris/IS], no. special (November 1948). ‘Letter on Yugoslavia. Sent to the IEC by the RCP (Britain)’, Prometheus Research Series no. 4 (New York, 1993 [1948]). Dennis Vern, ‘The Biography of Liquidation’, *Debate Bulletin* [New York/SWP] 15:5 (March 1953). Tim Wohlforth, ‘Cuba and the Deformed Workers States’, in *Marxist Bulletin* no. 8. *Cuba and the Marxist Theory. Selected Documents on the Cuban Question* (New York, 1966 [1961]). ‘In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective. A Statement of Basic Position’, *Discussion Bulletin* [New York/SWP] 23:4 (July 1962).

non-revolutionary party with petit-bourgeois leadership and mass influence leading a revolution, as was already present in the *Transitional Program* (1938).

Moreover, the RCP and the Vern-Ryan Tendency denied, based on the Permanent Revolution Theory, the possibility of *intermediary social regimes* between capitalism and dictatorship of the proletariat, pointing out that what happened in the postwar revolutions was politically unconscious expropriations (since they were not socialists, but instead desirous of an impossible conciliation with the bourgeoisie and imperialism) which needed to proceed into economical expropriations in order to avoid a counterrevolution (or they were defeated for their vacillation in doing it). Also, although the Revolutionary Tendency used a 'transitory state/regime' concept very similar to the majority sector's reinterpretation of the 'Workers and Peasants Government' slogan, all of these three groups denied the possibility of *gradual anti-capitalistic* social transformations.

Therefore they analyzed Eastern Europe's transformation as USSR's *military-bureaucratic expansion*, which in 1944 had already politically expropriated the bourgeoisie, although only in 1948 it had formally eliminated it from the government—thus, a qualitative social transformation had happened by the end of the war, not a gradual change process. The Yugoslav, Chinese and Cuban processes were analyzed as *exceptional cases* in which the objective logic forced non-revolutionary leaderships to go beyond their programs, for those leaderships need to politically and economically expropriate the native bourgeoisie and the imperialist capitals not only as the only way to accomplish the national-democratic tasks demanded by the masses, but essentially as a way to assure their own physical survival in a civil war context.

They defended that no political support should be given to the leaderships of those processes which indeed expropriated the bourgeoisie, since they had originated *bureaucratically deformed workers states*, with a leadership contrary to the internationalist expansion of the revolution and effectively counterrevolutionary on the international plane, just like Soviet Stalinism. Thus they defended the need to create Marxist (Trotskyist) parties capable of leading a *political revolution* to originate regimes of genuine proletarian democracy. They did not see these processes as a model that demanded a new revolutionary strategy, having instead pointed out the existence of several other cases where the contrary path was followed, that is, the conciliation with the bourgeoisie and imperialism at the expense of the national-democratic demands and, consequently, also socialism and the proletariat's emancipation.

The Vern-Ryan Tendency also pointed to the 1952 Bolivian Revolution experience as a proof that the 'anti-Pabloites' shared the same fundamental methodological deviations of the 'Pabloites', thus their practical agreements on giving critical support to the MNN coalition government (and more broadly, to that party's 'left wing') despite the local Fourth International's section mass influence, which left the proletarian struggle for power out of the agenda.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> S. [Sam] Ryan, 'The Bolivian Revolution and the Fight Against Revisionism', *Debate Bulletin* [New York/SWP] A-22 (October 1954).

Notwithstanding all those important differences with the self-named ‘orthodox Trotskyists’, its must be highlighted that these sectors did not question the notion according to which the social agents of many postwar revolutionary processes were ‘poor peasants’, having as well failed to detect the important changes the rural labor force went through as a consequence of the profound expansion of imperialist capitals towards the capitalist periphery in the postwar period and failing to detect the proletarian participation that, still small, was present in the key moments of the economical expropriations.

### Two Other Analyses: Ted Grant (RSL/IMT) and Tony Cliff (IST)

Lastly, two others (re)interpretations shall be mentioned. The one developed by Ted Grant during the 1960–1970s, when ahead of the British Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL, after his expulsion from The Club, on the follow-up of the RCP’s dissolution), was maintained during the 1990s, when he was expelled from the RSL and created the International Marxist Tendency (IMT). Abandoning the analysis and explanations developed when ahead of the RCP, Grant explained those postwar revolutions through the *proletarian Bonapartism* concept, according to which ‘peasant wars’ in (semi) colonial countries, if victorious, led to *Bonapartist regimes* based on the ‘peasant armies’ used against the colonial state. Regimes faced the choice of either fight against the native bourgeoisie and imperialism to achieve the national-democratic tasks, originating ‘Bonapartist workers’ states’, or rather repressing their rank-and-file supporters in a pact with those forces, originating ‘Bonapartist bourgeois states’.<sup>40</sup>

Although Grant saw those ‘Bonapartist workers’ states’ as ‘temporary aberrations’ and defended the need for *political revolutions* to implement proletarian democracy regimes, the fragility of criteria behind this thesis (the idea that a transition to a workers states made by choice of a classless bureaucracy is a possibility) led him to recognize ‘Bonapartist workers’ states’ in several different cases of military conflicts located on the capitalist periphery, such as Syria, Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Somalia, Myanmar and Afghanistan—and the list goes on.<sup>41</sup> In more recent times, this thesis led the IMT to a huge enthusiasm for the so-called ‘Bolivarian socialism’, having its leading-figure Alan Woods, who served as a political consultor of Hugo Chávez for many years.

The analysis developed by Tony Cliff (also an ex RCP'er, expelled from the Forth International in 1950) and sustained by the nowadays International Socialist Tendency (IST), which claims his political heritage. In 1947 Cliff refused the concept of a workers’ state to define the USSR, characterizing it instead as a *state capitalism* type of social formation, and argued that recognizing that workers’ states were originated

<sup>40</sup> Ted Grant, ‘The Colonial Revolution and the Sino-Soviet Dispute’, in *The Unbroken Thread. The Development of Trotskyism over 40 Years* (London: Fortress Books, 1989 [1964]).

<sup>41</sup> Grant, ‘The Colonial Revolution and the Workers’ States’, in *ibid.* ([1978]).

in the postwar period through a way that was not the ‘proletariat’s self-emancipation’ necessarily led to Pabloite liquidationism’.

Therefore, during the early 1960s, he developed the *Deflected Permanent Revolution* thesis to explain the postwar revolutions, which was a reinterpretation/update of the Permanent Revolution Theory according to which, in the absence of a revolutionary leadership and of a mobilization of the urban proletariat, certain ‘peasant war’ processes led by a ‘statist’ urban petit-bourgeois *intelligentsia* originated *bourgeois states* which were *independent* of imperialism and based upon a *state capitalism* system. In other words, peculiar bourgeois-democratic revolutions were made possible owing to the colonies’ loss of importance for imperialism under the ‘permanent war economy’ accumulation regime and the conjunctival political weakness of the proletariat in those countries.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

Obviously the history of the international Trotskyist movement does not end with the 1963 partial reunification—which only closed one of its chapters and opened another one. However, although the debates and analysis developed by different groups in order to explain posterior events (especially the ones about the *guerrilla way*) are an essential part of that history, the theoretical and analytical frameworks used by them were essentially the same as presented here. Except for some minor cases, the debates located between 1963 and the late 1970s are not theoretical ones, but instead about how to better apply those previously formulated ideas in the face of intense class conflicts.

The posterior developments of this movement, which led to an increasing organizational division, are also less linked to new debates than to old ones applied to new cases, fairly similar to the ‘original’ ones which constituted the interpretative matrix elaborated by each group. Therefore, without casting aside the relevance of the period that goes from the 1963 partial reunification to the new explosive events of the 1980s—the capitalist counterrevolutions inside the ‘Soviet bloc’, which constitute yet another decisive ‘chapter’ of Trotskyism’s history—it can be said that what is *essential* to understand this first long ‘chapter’ of the postwar (from 1944 to the end of the 1960s) lies in debates and disputes waged during the 1940–1960s.

As seen, the postwar revolutions led the Trotskyists of the time to a series of reinterpretations of the movement’s original theoretical and programmatic framework, which were not always explicit. However, the two main poles that were formed—which consolidated in 1953 in the form of a split Fourth International and a loosely tied International Committee with public faction functions—were far from being homogeneous blocs and standing for diametrically opposed analysis and positions, as the different still nowadays dominant narratives try to present it.

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<sup>42</sup> Tony Cliff, ‘Permanent Revolution’, *International Socialism* (1st series), no. 12 (Spring 1963), <http://tinyurl.com/zjx486c>. Cliff, *Trotskyism After Trotsky*, op. cit. Callinicos, op. cit.

Under the different and powerful pressures of producing answers for unexpected political events, at a time when they were highly isolated in face of the political forces that managed to surpass them in terms of international visibility and influence, the major part of the Trotskyists ended up distancing themselves from the sophisticated framework inherited from the prewar period, in particular Trotsky's own personal contributions. Under such pressures—plus those specific ones to which each Trotskyist group was subjected to in its own country—they substituted the need for a 'concrete analysis of the concrete situation' for different ready-made and almost mechanical formulas, making said framework stiff—still frequently through attempts to renew or supposedly retrieve it. In a major part they were not capable of analyzing with the required precision factors such as the profound transformations which the capitalist periphery's rural labor force passed through.

Without taking into consideration these different analysis and positions, by product of various pressures but, above all, of the necessity of comprehending unexpected and in a certain way genuinely new phenomenon, it is impossible to understand how Trotskyism ended up being fragmented into so many and distinct 'historical branches'. It is precisely from those analyses and positions that the origins of the majority of them come. The dualist narratives, according to which the Trotskyist movement's crisis is reduced to orthodox vs revisionists or realists vs sectarians, do not correspond to the complexity that emanates from the international Trotskyist movement's sources.

Retrieving the debates waged inside the international Trotskyist movement and the mapping of the theoretical and programmatic aspect of its tragic crisis is only a first step toward understanding it, for one must have in mind that it is impossible to achieve full comprehension of the crisis without a social dimension of this movement's history, the present paper being only a contribution to the task of retrieving the proletarian internationalism that the Fourth International attempted to materialize—the retrieval of which remains to be fulfilled in both the historiographical and the political senses.

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