

From Trotsky to Steinhardt: Crossing the Exes

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

August 1, 2002

For those with cause to remember, it is a stunning experience, to be reminded, again and again, still today, of the number of former U.S. adherents of the exiled Leon Trotsky who either—like Max Eastman or James Burnham—went over to far-right causes; or whose children are today’s adult political notables of the far to fascist right. If such “exes,” or “sons of exes,” had a Jewish pedigree, they would tend to be found today among the fascist fellow-travellers of such Vladimir Jabotinsky heirs as Israel’s notable Shamir, Sharon, and Netanyahu.

In all such cases of which I have knowledge, there were prevalent intellectual characteristics of the relevant, nominally “Trotskyist” organizations which helped significantly to produce the individuals’ later personal moral degeneration.

However, although there were also parallel developments, in the name of “Trotskyism,” in Europe and elsewhere, the syndrome have just identified above, is, essentially, an indigenous U.S. sociological phenomenon. It was chiefly an outgrowth of a split of one of the leading factions from within the 1920s Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA), that led by one James P. Cannon, in which Cannon et al., breaking from the Moscow-appointed CPUSA leadership of Jay Lovestone, attached themselves, for factional reasons, to the “historical legitimacy” of one-time Soviet leader Trotsky. They adopted the cover for their own claims to Communist legitimacy, of arguing that Trotsky, rather than either Bukharin or Stalin, was the “true follower” of Vladimir Lenin.

For the result, a Trotsky desperate for a following incurred only some of the blame.

It was only typical of all varieties of 1920s and later spin-offs from the CPUSA, that each was just as much a “revision-

ist” as its adopted factional rival, a rivalry which was employed with zeal by the sundry official and quasi-official police-agent circles, such as the FBI, playing games in the sandbox of U.S. left-wing political competitions. So, in the case of the avowedly “Trotskyist” currents, the definition of “Trotskyism” became the preoccupation of each with its own “revisionist” version of some selected aspect of Trotsky’s deeds or writings. Therefore, the sometimes hilarious absurdity of the avowed “Trotskyist’s” vision of Trotsky himself, is the appropriate point of departure from which the United States’ nominally Trotskyist associations are to be studied, during the decades preceding the decay of their present relics into anarchoid polymorphous perversity.

Thus, to understand the march of ex-Trotskyists into profascist varieties of Zionist and other right-wing causes, such as the John McCain-boosting Hudson Institute, think of a likeness to a comet which split apart on route to its death in the Sun. They passed a spot proximate to the real-life Trotsky, and their subsequent trajectory was affected by that; but their present destination had, chiefly, a North American character. Looking back to the 1930s through 1950s, American Trotskyism was more affected by the predominantly pathological traits common to the North American populist, than by Trotsky.

Essentially, on the political stage, the last gasp of a notable, arguably historically useful role by the American Trotskyists, was in their role of resistance against that post-FDR right-wing turn, under President Harry Truman, which became known as “McCarthyism.” After President Eisenhower crushed McCarthy, the American “Trotskyist” currents were a fish on a beach, left thrashing about in despairing hope of water.

After Senator Joe McCarthy’s fall, there was nothing of



Sidney Hook (here debating LaRouche associate Don Buck in 1971) and Max Eastman (inset) epitomize the Trotskyites who became leading right-wing ideologues. Leading Trotskyite Eastman became a co-founder with fascist William F. Buckley, of Buckley's National Review.



significance going on inside the heads of the American Trotskyist organizations' leaders. First, they attempted to survive by taking in one another's laundry, and also the laundry of the fragmenting Communist Party. That only increased the rate of decline into a swamp of intellectual and moral bankruptcy. In that decadent state of affairs, the post-1963 upsurge of the "rock-sex-drug youth counterculture," swept them up, and carted them off to the U.S. internal security apparatus's political "fish market," whence the aromas of their decadent past are exhibited today.

Admittedly, Trotskyism is remembered among current generations today, only as a comic-book caricature of itself. Nonetheless, since we are again gripped by an international financial-economic and social crisis, one even more portentous than that of the 1930s, it is useful to study the common failure of all so-called "radical movements," relative to the 1933-1945 leadership of President Franklin Roosevelt. The case of the role of certain types of ex-Trotskyists and their offspring, in pro-fascist enterprises such as the McCain-boosting Hudson Institute, has special relevance on this account.

Trotsky in Passing

An historical grasp of the migration of certain dead souls from Trotskyism to fascism, begins with recognizing certain weaknesses in Trotsky as the one-time follower of Alexander "Parvus" Helphand; the Trotsky who confessed from exile, in his autobiography, to a continuing affinity to the radically

empiricist world-outlook of Jeremy Bentham. The problematic characteristics of self-styled "Trotskyist" circles, it is also reflected by Trotsky's own affinities for anarcho-syndicalist leanings.

Trotsky's U.S. fame as an intellectual figure was launched, with the help of some U.S. mass-media's lurid headlines, by one of the key founders of the Communist Party U.S.A., Louis Fraina (aka Lewis Corey). Fraina launched the first of the nominally pro-Bolshevik organizations later merged to form the Communist Party U.S.A. The notion of "Trotskyism" as a distinct current within Bolshevism was launched by the Max Eastman who later found himself in the far-right circles of gnostic (e.g., "Carlist") fascist William F. Buckley, et al.

Trotsky's actual accomplishments as a revolutionary figure were associated with his effective audacity as an orator deployed in support of Vladimir Lenin's leadership, both during the months leading into the Soviets' taking of power, and during the period the civil war, prior to Trotsky's failure to grasp the reality of the strategic situation in his role as negotiator with German General Hoffmann at Brest-Litovsk. His fame as a thinker rests on chiefly three claims made by him and others.

The first was his association with a doctrine of "permanent revolution," a claim actually based on a work written by Anglo-Russian agent Alexander "Parvus" Helphand. At that time Helphand was Trotsky's controller,

in the unfolding of that 1905 Russian revolution launched under the direction of Okhrana chief Colonel Zubatov. This was the same Zubatov who had been a key figure in controlling both Helphand and Vladimir Jabotinsky—although Helphand was predominantly a British intelligence asset, as Zubatov was also suspected to have been, from the mid-1890s on.

The second was Trotsky's fame as a putative 1924 discoverer of the Soviet "Scissors Crisis." That crisis had been discovered by E. Preobrazhensky, the leading Russian economist of the 1920s, and the founder of the Soviet Left Opposition against Vienna-trained economics bungler N. Bukharin's failed Soviet policies. At a crucial moment, Trotsky stepped to the platform to announce his adoption of Preobrazhensky's work.

Despite Trotsky's public adoption of the long-wave doctrine of Konratieff, neither he nor any of the U.S. Trotskyist leaders had any personal competence in economics.

Third, was Trotsky's celebrated *History of the Russian Revolution*. This was a truly original work. Although the argument has been contested, in part, by a number of competent historians, it is an unignorable work overall.

As Rosa Luxemburg, the only competent, original thinker among so-called Marxist economists of her time, reacted to the "October 1917" Soviet seizure of power, Lenin and Trotsky shared the honors for an *audacity* otherwise lacking in their peers, in the situation in which they found themselves. Essentially, Lenin's original break with Plekhanov and Kautsky was demonstrated in action and in theory by those events. For a time, during 1917 and afterwards, Trotsky did support Lenin in fact on this issue. Later, Trotsky's susceptibility to the mechanistic view of history was reflected in the pathetic tactics and increasing decadence among his putative followers in Europe and the U.S.A.

A common source of confusion on these and related matters, among actual and would-be historians, is the failure to recognize that Lenin himself, the Bolshevik Party, and Trotsky, were, respectively, quite different "kettles of fish." Lenin was the anti-Kantian philosophical voluntarist he remained since his break with Plekhanov, Kautsky, et al. within the official European Social Democracy. The Bolshevik leaders of 1917 and later, were predominantly anti-voluntarists in the Marx-Engels tradition, a persuasion which ultimately doomed the Soviet system. Trotsky was essentially, like his one-time sponsor Parvus, an often brilliantly insightful philosophical Romantic, but otherwise essentially a Romantic from beginning to end.

Admittedly, Lenin himself was a complicated personality, philosophically and otherwise; it was his voluntarist side which produced the mark he left on the history of our planet since. During a certain crucial period of Russia's history,

these three, philosophically distinct currents converged upon common tasks.

To understand the systemic failures of the socialist movements generally, including the varieties of scoundrels that systemic flaw fostered, look at that underlying issue of society, to which all political currents, including nominally socialist ones, are subject.

The Matter of Voluntarism

Decades ago, I presented the concept of what I termed a "fundamental emotion," within the setting of a continuing set of lectures on the subject of economics. This is the principle on which all of my original contributions to science have been premised, since 1948-1953, a principle whose germ-form I adopted earlier, during adolescence, as the basis, adapted from Leibniz's writings, for an anti-Kantian principle of cognitive knowledge. The fundamental distinction between man and the beasts, is the sovereign capability of the mind to generate hypotheses validated experimentally as universal physical principles. It is the transmission of that experience of discovery of that hypothesis—that, as a Platonic hypothesis—in the mind of another, which sets the human species, as a species, apart from, and absolutely above all other living creatures.

The contrary view, the mechanistic misconception of man, is typified by the case of British ideologue F. Engels' absurd claims for the miraculous powers of the "opposable thumb." Engels' claim is based upon an assertion contrary to simple fact, but it is nonetheless consistent with the commonly characteristic prejudice of the French and British Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment, and with the empiricism out of which that Enlightenment grew. This is also the view of the medieval Cathars and their imitators among certain of both Catholic and Protestant currents which emerged in the Sixteenth-Century pro-feudal reaction against the Fifteenth-Century Renaissance: the notion, advanced by crooked statisticians such as Locke, Quesnay, Adam Smith, and the Jeremy Bentham foolishly admired by Trotsky, that virtual little green men from under the floorboards of the universe, are fixing the throw of the dice, to make some persons powerful and the others poorer: the so-called doctrine of "free trade," and of then-Vice President Al Gore's savage attack on Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir, in defense of "little green man" George-the-drug-traffic-legalizer Soros.

The nastiest version of this dogma known to Karl Marx was the fascist doctrine of the theory of the state published by G.W.F. Hegel. Hegel, together with his anti-science crony Savigny, is the author of that notion of the fascist state which emerged in 1930s Germany. This connection should make clear to us the perverse logic by which a devoutly anti-voluntarist member of a professedly Trotskyist persuasion is transformed, all too easily, into a fascist. The case of Hegel's emergence as the leading fascist philosopher post-Vienna Congress Prussia, is of exemplary relevance.

Hegel was among a collection of former enthusiasts for July 14, 1789, who fell upon their knees in adulation of the conquering fascist dictator Napoleon Bonaparte during the interval 1803-1806. This absolutely irrational enthusiasm for Napoleon became the pervasive premise for Hegel's philosophy of history and theory of the state; the premise, adopted in admiration of Napoleon, for the enthronement of Napoleon's admirer Adolf Hitler.

The only durable alternative to fascism today is the voluntarist view of history: A view which demands that society be self-governed by experimentally demonstrable Platonic hypotheses, each generated by the sovereign cognitive capabilities of individual human minds. Since such individuals' discoveries of universal principle must be socialized among individuals within a national culture, the notion of a modern, perfectly sovereign nation-state republic, follows. Among nations, this must lead to a community of principle among perfectly sovereign nation-state republics.

If, on the contrary, the notion of a voluntarist relationship to the discovery of experimentally validated universal physical principles, is not adopted, the transition from a nominally Trotskyist Romantic to a fascist is as quick and easy as one could say Sidney Hook or James Burnham.

The Role of Cultural Pessimism

Among us, we have known cases of acute personal degeneration, such as the cases of DG, CZ, and FQ, in which their

break with our association took the form of accelerating personal moral degeneracy. They did not return to their former beliefs, but, rather, went directly to Hell, "without passing Go," in the search for solid ground under a bottomless bottom. In each case, they went searching among those forces which had attempted to destroy us, for some equivalent of "little green men" who would adopt and succor them.

There is a fundamental difference between a poor fellow, who has not yet discovered the principle which sets people apart from beasts, and the decadent wretch who has sought to eradicate the existence of that principle. The Communist who no longer believes, but seeks to retain his position of power within the Soviet system, or the monsignor who, having lost his belief, fights to exert power against John Paul II within the Church, are merely typical of this class of moral degenerates.

As now-deceased former Socialist Workers Party leader Farrell Dobbs once observed, "There is a difference between those who leave, and those who stop to crap on the floor on the way out." The latter type often turned out to be police-agents or the equivalent; and some, or their children, moved on to become notable fascists today.

If you are such a wretch, and have rediscovered a Jewish ancestry, you are likely to choose a Zionist cover for your fascist affiliations, and thus become a backer of such Jabotinsky clones as Sharon, Netanyahu, or Shamir. Perhaps Michael Steinhardt would explain the details to you.