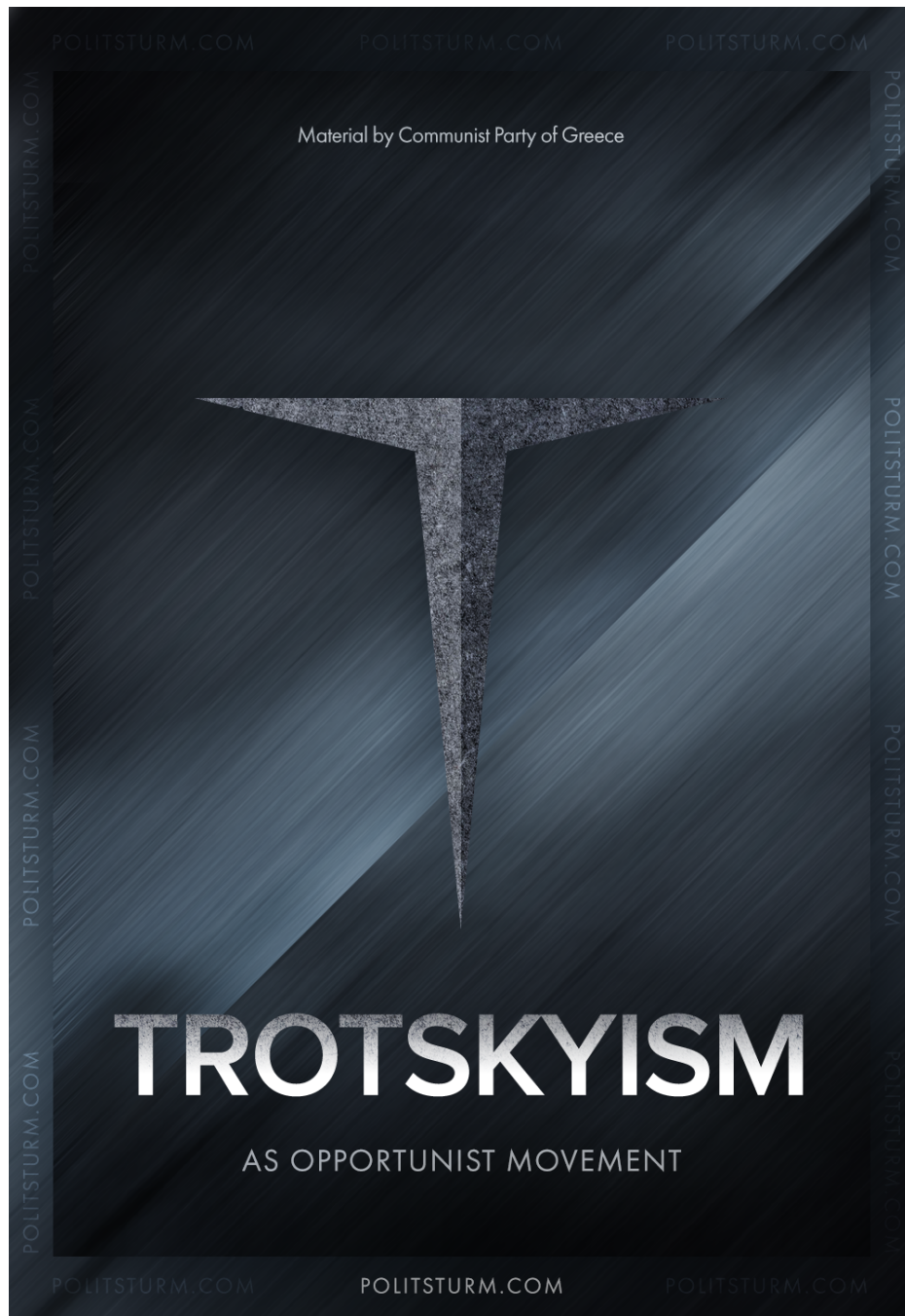


# Trotskyism as an Opportunist Movement



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We present to your attention the translation of an article by Kyrillos Papastavrou, head of the ideological department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece. The article was published in the theoretical magazine of the CPG "Communist Epiteorisi" (Communist Review) in the 1st issue of 2008.

## Introduction

In this article, we will examine Trotskyism, its history as an opportunist current within the labour movement, and its present state.

The need for this analysis is due to the following factors:

Firstly, the capitalist system actively uses Trotsky's image, making ahistorical attacks on Lenin and Stalin, and questioning the construction of socialism in the USSR. On the 89th anniversary of the October Revolution, the struggle over Trotsky's statements on the alleged impossibility of the victory of socialism in Russia is gaining momentum.

Secondly, a number of organizations both in our country and abroad, calling themselves Trotskyists or using Trotskyist theory, are increasing their efforts amongst the youth, especially in schools and universities, as well as among the working class. These groups are too small to be a threat in the communist movement, but under the guise of "revolutionism," they reproduce bourgeois and opportunist views, promote forces which are harmless to capitalism, and they create obstacles for the Party and Komsomol in the ideological and political struggle for socialism.

To lay a foundation for understanding Trotskyism, we will say in advance that Trotskyism is an opportunist current in the workers' movement, characterized by petty-bourgeois ultra-revolutionary phraseology in words, and absolute compromise in practice. In the 1930s, under the conditions of the imperialist struggle against the USSR, Trotskyism took an openly hostile stance toward the Soviet Union. As an ideological and political current, Trotskyism became hostile to the theory and practice of Leninism.

## Formation of Trotskyism as an opportunist movement

### Pre-revolutionary period

Trotsky, and his modern followers often call themselves Bolsheviks and reference the Bolsheviks. Bolshevism, however, "has existed as a current of political thought and as a party since 1903." (V.I. Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder), and Trotskyism has been hostile to Bolshevism since the beginning. The

starting point of Trotskyism was the rejection of Lenin's doctrine of a new type of party. As early as the Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903, Trotsky sided with Lenin's opponents in the debates on the Charter.

Lenin's revolutionary positions on the Charter issue were accepted by the majority, and the wing that supported him was named the Bolsheviks, while the opportunist group

(Trotsky, Martov, Axelrod) remained in the minority and was therefore called the Mensheviks.

It is revealing how Trotsky addresses Lenin during this period of struggle. Here are some excerpts from Trotsky's book *Our Political Tasks*, published in 1904, which characterize his views and are evidence of his anti-Marxist, opportunist line of thought. They refute the Trotskyists' claims that Lenin's disagreement with Trotsky was partial. Criticizing Lenin's work "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward," Trotsky wrote:

*"...And this is supposed to be Marxist and Social Democratic thinking! Really, no greater cynicism can be shown towards the richest ideological heritage of the proletariat than by comrade Lenin! For him, Marxism is not a method of scientific analysis, a method imposing enormous theoretical responsibilities; it is a rag which you can trample underfoot if you want; a blank screen on which to project things larger than life and a pliant rule when the state of party consciousness has to be taken into account!"*

Elsewhere he mentions the following:

*"The head of the reactionary wing of our party, Comrade Lenin ... has been forced to define Social Democracy in a way which is a theoretical attack against the class character of our Party. Yes, a theoretical attack, no less dangerous than the 'critical' ideas of some Bernstein"(ibid., p.98)*

Elsewhere, with reference to the newspaper *Iskra*:

*"The old Iskra took it as its task not to enlighten the political consciousness of the intelligentsia, but to theoretically terrorize it. For the social democrats trained in this school, 'orthodoxy' is something very close to the absolute Truth of the Jacobins. Orthodox Truth ruled everywhere, even in the matter of co-optation. Whoever challenged it was removed; whoever questioned it came under doubt."(ibid., p.96)*

In 1910-1914 the RSDLP was not a single party; there were separate parties which concentrated around their own branches, and had their own governing bodies. Chief among these were the Lenin Bolsheviks and two Menshevik groups, the Trotskyists and the Otzovists. The Trotskyists claimed the role of conciliators between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, but in essence supported the positions of the Menshevik bandits.

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During World War I, Trotskyism was an integral part of "centrism", a trend in international social democracy that oscillated between social-chauvinism and petty-bourgeois pacifism and advocated "reconciliation" between revolutionary socialists (leftists) and opportunists and revisionists (rightists).

In the course of the revolutionary processes in Russia, the Trotskyists declared their agreement with the Bolshevik line and at the VI Congress of the RSDLP(b) were accepted into the ranks of the Bolsheviks. Thus, Trotsky became a member of the Bolshevik Party in July 1917.

But even after joining the Bolsheviks, Trotsky maintained his autonomy and continued his struggle against Lenin. The Trotskyists opposed the Brest Peace Treaty in 1918, and disrupted the timely signing of it, causing a great loss to the still young and weak Soviet power.

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During the Civil War, Trotskyism became an opportunist current within the RCP(b). In 1920- 1921 the Trotskyists initiated an intraparty discussion about trade unions. They formed factions with their own political program. The essence of their program was to turn trade unions into a part of the state mechanism and to question the leading role of the party in building socialism.

The basic tenet of Trotskyism was the denial of the possibility of building socialism in the USSR. Following in the footsteps of the Menshevik leaders, the Trotskyists argued that the working class in the Soviet Union could not consolidate its power and build socialism because of the technical and economic backwardness of the country, which was in a capitalist environment. Therefore, they argued that the victory of the revolution would be very short-lived and that Soviet power would be defeated unless socialist revolutions were also won in European countries, which would assist the working class of the USSR. Trotskyism opposed the principles of forming a new type of party and, ostensibly defending intraparty democracy, claimed freedom to create factions within the party.

Under the influence of Trotsky, Trotskyist groups were formed in other parties, such as Germany, France, Britain, Czechoslovakia, etc. In the USSR, all anti-Bolshevik groups united around Trotskyism. Lenin and Stalin responded to the Trotskyists with articles, speeches and statements in the Party organs. Trotskyism was condemned at many conferences and plenums of the Central Committee.

In 1927, the 15th Congress of the RCP(b) approved the decision of the Central Committee to expel Trotsky and Zinoviev from the party. In 1928, the 9th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern stressed that an affiliation with Trotskyism was incompatible with membership in the Communist International, and this decision was ratified by the 6th Congress (1928).

## Post-October Period

Both the Trotskyites and the bourgeoisie give the struggle in the Party and in the Soviet state in the 1920s and 30s the character of a personal confrontation between Trotsky and Stalin. Bourgeois propaganda portrays Trotsky as a pure and innocent revolutionary, against whom treason was committed. This propaganda is not accidental, given how qualitative and profound it is: documentaries and feature films are made, it is written about in the media, in textbooks, etc.

And so, the Trotskyists have another way of promoting their views that makes them known to a degree disproportionate to their organizational capabilities. The capitalist system has an objective interest in promoting Trotskyism because these views cultivate and develop a line of defeatism. This was not a struggle of personalities, but a struggle of political positions around questions of building socialism, state administration, etc., a struggle under unprecedented conditions.

Trotsky and his followers treated Marxism dogmatically, as did many right-wing opportunist leaders of the Second International. They had an "ideal model" of revolution and socialist construction that was far removed from the complexities of Russia in 1917. The Trotskyists, as petty-bourgeois intellectuals, truly believed that the working masses could not lead the poor peasantry. They did not believe that under the leadership of the Communist Party, the uneducated and politically

backward masses could implement the ideas of the October Revolution and build a socialist society. They believed that a “dictatorship in the countryside” should be established in order to reduce the resistance of the “hostile” peasants to the workers, and wait for the help of the proletarian revolution from the West. They also proposed military adventures in the name of the revolutionary war and the “export of revolution”.

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However, the revolutionary wave of 1918-1923 could not prevail in any other European country but Russia. Of course, one cannot blame the Bolsheviks for not fighting revolutionary wars and exporting the revolution at a time when the civil war in their country was not over, when they were facing imperialist intervention and conspiracies, when they were fighting for the domination of Soviet power throughout the country.

The logic of the Trotskyists led to a dead end. Having classified Marxism not as a science, but as dogma, they could not understand the complexity of the tasks which confronted the Soviet power, a country that began with a low level of development of the productive forces, and where the vast majority of the population were peasants. They could not understand the evolution of the strategy of revolution on the basis of the doctrine of imperialism. They dogmatically defended the earlier estimates of Marx, Engels and other Marxists before the beginning of the twentieth century about the victory of the socialist revolution in the developed capitalist countries of Western Europe.

Lenin contributed to the further development of Marxism by formulating the theory of the “weak link in the chain of imperialism,” based on the law of unequal development of capitalism.

According to this theory, the world system of imperialism can be broken in one country meeting a number of conditions (historical, economic and political), making capitalism more vulnerable to the onset of a revolution. It theorized the possibility of revolution being carried out and won in a single country:

*“...The slogan of a United States of the World would hardly be a correct one, first, because it merges with socialism; second, because it may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the victory of socialism in a single country is impossible, and it may also create misconceptions as to the relations of such a country to the others. Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone. After expropriating the capitalists and organizing their own socialist production, the victorious proletariat of that country will arise against the rest of the world—the capitalist world—attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, stirring uprisings in those countries against the capitalists, and in case of need using even armed force against the exploiting classes and their states.”(V.I. Lenin, “On the Slogan of the United States of Europe”)*

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At the same time Trotsky wrote in in response to Lenin’s article:

*“It would be hopeless to think... that revolutionary Russia, for example, would be able to maintain herself in the face of conservative Europe, or that Socialist Germany could remain isolated in a capitalist world. To view the perspectives of the social revolution within a national framework is to succumb to the same national narrowness that forms the content of social-patriotism.”(L.D. Trotsky, “The Program of Peace”)*

On the other hand, we must also acknowledge the fact that the country in which the imperialist chain broke in 1917 was not any country, but the Russian Empire, which had gathered a large amount of land with rich subsoil, monopolistic capitalism was developing, had deep contradictions within it and the persistence of many pre-capitalist elements, mainly in agricultural production, but also in the superstructure.

At a time when the revolution, with its unimaginable difficulties during the Civil War and the acute class struggle, was struggling to strengthen Soviet power; while Lenin and Stalin, as leaders of the RCP(b) and the entire Bolshevik leadership, used every opportunity to win revolutionary power for the working class and transition to socialism in Russia, Trotsky cultivated defeatism, removing himself from the question of strengthening the USSR.

The Trotskyists' views that revolution was impossible in Russia were based on the idea that it would have been impossible to integrate the poor and the middle classes into the revolution, that it would have been impossible to preserve the union of workers and peasants, and that a clash between the working class and the broad peasant masses was inevitable. The only way out, from their perspective, was to wait for help from proletarian revolutions in the West. This point of view was expressed by Trotsky from 1905 onward based on the provisions for continuous or permanent revolution formulated by Marx and Engels in 1850, who foresaw the possibility of the transformation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution, and its expansion from country to country in advanced capitalist Europe.

But permanent revolution, to Trotsky, meant a clash with the peasantry, who were seen as a reactionary force, regardless of class differentiation in the village. Lenin, commenting on Trotsky's position, wrote:

*"From the Bolsheviks Trotsky's original theory has borrowed their call for a decisive proletarian revolutionary struggle and for the conquest of political power by the proletariat, while from the Mensheviks it has borrowed "repudiation" of the peasantry's role."(V.I. Lenin, "On the Two Lines of the Revolution")*

Trotsky dogmatically interpreted the fact that the peasants, as small landowners, attached to their land and property, were not a single class, could not in themselves play a progressive role in social development based on their social position, and the state of agriculture in Russia at the time. In essence, it was a mechanical conception of the class struggle, an absolutization of the reactionary side of the small landowner, the impossibility of drawing him into the struggle with the bourgeoisie on the side of the proletariat, a disbelief in the abilities of the proletariat and its party.

But this possibility was foreseen by K. Marx and F. Engels, as can be read in "The Communist Manifesto", which states that the peasants can aid the revolution,

*"If by chance, they are revolutionary, they are only so in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat."(Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto")*

This is seen even more clearly in "Louis Bonaparte's 18th Brumaire":

*"Therefore, the interests of the peasants are no longer, as under Napoleon, in accord with, but are now in opposition to bourgeois interests, to capital. Hence, they find their natural ally and leader in the urban proletariat, whose task it is to overthrow the bourgeois order."(K. Marx, F. Engels, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," Chapter VII)*

The Trotskyists saw neither the need to compromise with the peasant masses, who made up the vast majority of the Russian population, nor the possibility of integrating a large part of the poor and middle peasantry into the program of the revolution.

*"The differentiation of the peasantry has enhanced the class struggle within them; it has aroused very many hitherto politically dormant elements. It has drawn the rural proletariat closer to the urban proletariat... This is such an obvious truth that not even the thousands of phrases in scores of Trotsky's Paris articles will "refute" it. Trotsky is in fact helping the liberal-labor politicians in Russia, who by "repudiation" of the role of the peasantry understand a refusal to raise up the peasants for the revolution!!"(V.I. Lenin, "On the Two Lines of the Revolution")*

The agreement with the peasantry, that is, the option of a united peasantry through the division of land – which after the October Revolution became and remained state property – did not mean abandoning the socialist goal of the communalization of large-scale production and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It did, however, take into account the balance of class forces in Russian society, reinforced class differences within the peasantry itself, and increased the concentration of fragmented agricultural production in such a way as to facilitate the path of its socialization:

*"What does peace in the countryside mean? It is one of the fundamental conditions for the building of socialism. We cannot build socialism if we have bandit activities and peasant revolts. The crop area has now been brought up to pre-war dimensions (95 per cent), we have peace in the countryside, an alliance with the middle peasants, a more or less organized poor peasantry, strengthened rural Soviets and the enhanced prestige of the proletariat and its Party in the countryside. We have thus created the conditions that enable us to push forward the offensive against the capitalist elements in the countryside and to ensure further success in the building of socialism in our country."(Stalin, "The Trotskyist Opposition Before and Now")*

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After the end of the civil war, when the task of strengthening the union of workers and peasants came up, Trotsky advocated violent collectivization by military means, which would have essentially meant a civil war in the countryside.

Collectivization took place in 1929-1933 as the result of a fierce class struggle, in which it became possible to pull in a large fraction of the poor through collectivization. Under these conditions in 1930, Trotsky and his followers described collectivization and dekulakization as a "bureaucratic gamble" (L.D. Trotsky, "Fiddling in the Apparatus"). In March of the same year, Trotsky wrote: "...the utopian-reactionary nature of 'total collectivization' consists ... of the forced creation of large collective farms without the technical basis that alone could ensure their superiority over small ones" (L.D. Trotsky, "Open Letter to Members of the VKP(b)"). He prophesied that "collective farms would collapse in anticipation of the technical infrastructure" (Afterword "From the Editor" to the article by J. Gref, "The Collectivization of the Village and Relative Overpopulation," Opposition Bulletin No. 11, May 1930).

Reality disproved all these "predictions", despite all the mistakes made in the development of socialist construction in the path to collectivization.

The Trotskyists saw the trade unions as the leading organs of the working class in the construction of socialism and wanted to introduce military measures into them. In fact, behind this concept was the notion that the dictatorship of the proletariat's power was exercised directly by the entire class, and since the class as a whole was not yet mature enough, "maturity" would be imposed onto it through administrative measures. This bureaucratic understanding once again showed an underestimation

of the possibility of convincing the masses through communist activities.

Lenin argued at length with Trotsky on this point. In his work "Trade Unions, Modernity, and Trotsky's Mistakes", he specifically contrasts:

"But the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be exercised through an organization embracing the whole of that class, because in all capitalist countries (and not only over here, in one of the most backward) the proletariat is still so divided, so degraded, and so corrupted in parts (by imperialism in some countries) that an organization taking in the whole proletariat cannot directly exercise proletarian dictatorship. It can be exercised only by a vanguard that has absorbed the revolutionary energy of the class." (The Trade Unions, The Present Situation And Trotsky's Mistakes")

Concerning the role to be played by trade unions in the same project, Lenin noted:

*"It cannot work without a number of 'transmission belts' running from the vanguard to the mass of the advanced class, and from the latter to the mass of the working people."(Ibid.)*

Stalin also noted:

*"The trade unions may be termed the all-embracing organization of the working class, which is in power in our country. They are a school of communism. They promote the best people from their midst for the work of leadership in all branches of administration. They form the link between the advanced and the backward elements in the ranks of the working class. They connect the masses of the workers with the vanguard of the working class..." (Stalin, "To the Questions of Leninism")*

He also explained the role of the party in the dictatorship of the proletariat:

*"Of course, this must not be understood in the sense that the Party can or should take the place of the trade unions, the Soviets, and the other mass organizations. The Party exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, it exercises it not directly, but with the help of the trade unions, and through the Soviets and their ramifications. Without these 'transmission belts,' it would be impossible for the dictatorship to be at all firm..."(Ibid.)"But this, however, must not be understood in the sense that a sign of equality can be put between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the leading role of the Party (the 'dictatorship' of the Party), that the former can be identified with the latter, that the latter can be substituted for the former..."(Ibid.)*

Lenin highlighted that the essence of the disagreement lay precisely in the question of methods of approaching the masses, which Trotsky handled mechanically, without taking into account not only the differences in the maturity of the working masses, but also the weakness of socialist power itself in the first stage of its domination (the transitional period within the transitional period described by Lenin), when it was necessary not to identify it with trade unions, but to rely on them. Trotsky and his followers "simplified" the complex processes of forming the socialist consciousness of the masses during the period of socialist construction by decrees and administrative measures. Wherever they dominated the leadership of the trade unions, they came into conflict with the working masses.

Trotsky, despite the fact that the relevant party organs voted against him, continued to support these views throughout the internal party struggle of the 1920s.

To summarize the critical presentation of Trotsky's views, they can be characterized as follows: dogmatism, denial of the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country, distrust of the masses, relying on authoritarianism and militaristic methods, and denial of the role of the party in the dictatorship of the proletariat and a

petty-bourgeois view of freedom of opinion and belief, which then led to the creation of factions and undermined the unity of the RCP(b).

## Trotskyism as a counterrevolutionary force

The persistent denial of the possibility of building socialism in one country led to a denial of the socialist nature of the USSR. Trotsky accused the leadership of the RCP(b) of Bonapartism,

asserting the impossibility of socialist construction in Russia, and on this basis, step by step, sliding towards more and more reactionary views and actions.

In the 1930s, given the imperialist aggression against the Soviet Union, Trotskyism essentially called for the overthrow of Soviet power. To this end, the Trotskyists cooperated with all opposition groups in the USSR. The relations of the Trotskyists with a number of anti-party and anti-Soviet groups in the USSR were well established.

Trotsky openly advocated the violent overthrow of Soviet power, asking the question, "Is 'peaceful' removal of the bureaucracy possible?" and answering:

*"After the experiences of the last few years, it would be childish to suppose that the Stalinist bureaucracy can be removed by means of a party or soviet congress. In reality, the last congress of the Bolshevik Party took place at the beginning of 1923, the Twelfth Party Congress. All subsequent congresses were bureaucratic parades. Today, even such congresses have been discarded. No normal "constitutional" ways remain to remove the ruling clique. The bureaucracy can be compelled to yield power into the hands of the proletarian vanguard only by force."(L.D. Trotsky, "The Class Nature of the Soviet State")*

He considered this, of course, no easy task, recognizing that for what he called "Stalinist bureaucracy," "the social roots of bureaucracy lie, as we know, in the proletariat: if not in its active support, then at least in its 'toleration'." (ibid.)

The victory of the counterrevolution in the late 1980's is not a confirmation of Trotskyist theories and predictions. Socialism did not "collapse" and turn into capitalism in the twenties, as the Trotskyites claimed. In the process of building socialism there is a struggle between the new and the old. Both Lenin and Stalin, as leaders of socialist construction, knew this.

## A Brief History of Trotskyism in Greece in the Interwar Period

The most prominent expression of Trotskyism in Greece can be called the "arch-Marxist" current of the 1930s. In the mid-1920s, long before Trotskyism was formed, the magazine "Archive Marxism" appeared, whose slogan was "Education first, then action". "Archive Marxism" was an opportunist current in the Greek labour movement. "Archio-Marxists" actively opposed the CPG. An excerpt from an announcement by the Party Politburo at the First Workers' Youth Congress is typical: "Members of the 'Archive', delegates and ordinary participants, seeing their failure and seeking the dissolution of the conference, attacked Komsomol members and sympathizers with knives, as well as representatives of the 'separated' from the 'Archive'."

In 1930, the “Communist Group of Marxist-Leninists Archivists” was formed, which in 1934 was renamed the “Greek Communist Archivist Party”. “The Archio-Marxists” were recognized as the official representative of the so-called “International Left Opposition” in Greece, which later evolved into the “4th International.”, and the main Trotskyist organizations that were part of the “4th International” started here. At the turn of the 20s and 30s, the “archivists” managed to influence some strata of the working class because of the internal party crisis in the CCP. However, active measures to overcome the crisis on the basis of Comintern instructions and the establishment of strong ties with the masses, led to the growth of the CPG and limited the influence of the “Archio-Marxists”.

This current split into two groups: one group, led by Dimitris Giotopoulos, broke away in 1934 and the other group led by D. Vitsori followed the “4th International”. Proof of the degeneration of Giotopoulos’ “Greek Archio-Marxist Party” is the welcome letter to the government sent by the 3rd Party Conference in 1949 in honour of the victory over the DSE (the Greek Democratic Army, the armed wing of the CPG which took part in the Civil War). After the dissolution of the “Archio-Marxist party” in the 1950s, most of its members joined bourgeois parties.

In the Trotskyist direction in Greece throughout the 30’s and 40’s were constant splits and renaming. The end of the war led to the emergence of a number of small organizations claiming to be the “Greek section of the 4th International”.

## **Trotskyists during the German Occupation and the Civil War**

During the occupation, a number of Trotskyists took a position in favor of the national resistance and joined the National Liberation Front (EAM) or collaborated with it. Most of the Trotskyist groups opposed the resistance, however, considering it a continuation of the imperialist war. This attitude was also determined by their position with regard to the USSR and the question of defending it. For the majority of the Greek Trotskyists and the official representatives of the “4th International” in Greece, there was no question of defending the Soviet Union. They believed that the conclusion of agreements between the USSR and the imperialist states “discourages and disappoints the world proletariat and becomes an obstacle to the transformation of the present war into a civil war.”, “The defeat of the USSR will inflame the masses, will show the truth, and their instinct will lead them to defend the gains of the October Revolution.”

Based on these notions, the Trotskyists – who dogmatically reproduced the slogans of solidarity of the soldiers of the imperialist coalitions in World War I – urged the Greek people not to resist the German and Italian occupiers because they were armed workers with whom they should seek reconciliation in order to turn the war into a socialist revolution.

These positions led to assessments similar to those contained in the joint statement of the two main Trotskyist groups during the occupation, the “Internationalist Communist Party of Greece” and the “Party of Communist Internationalists of Greece”:

*“Those executed in May 1944 are victims of the policy of the Stalinist party in our country, which in view of the partisan war, sabotage, murders of German workers and peasants, and acts of pinpoint terrorism gives the German military the necessary pretext for beheading workers.”*

At the insistence of the 4th International, a conference was held in 1946 to unite the various Trotskyist groups. Here are the following characteristic excerpts from the

January 15, 1946 Special Issue of the Labor Front, the organ of the Central Committee of the "International Revolutionary Party", which published the "Central Committee proposals" for a "unifying conference" of the Trotskyists of Greece:

*"In war conditions there is no difference between Social Democracy, Stalinism, bourgeois- democratic parties and Fascism.... The task of the proletarian party (i.e., the Trotskyists - author's note) under occupation is to intensify its struggle against nationalist organizations and protect the working class from anti- German hatred and nationalist poison."*

It goes without saying that they characterize EAM, ELAS and other organizations as nationalist.

Next:

*"The Proletarian Party condemns all patriotic struggle, however large-scale and whatever forms it may take, and openly calls upon the workers to abstain from it. [...] Participation in the 'resistance movement' under any pretext and with any supporting documents means participation in war. The detachment of the masses from the influence of nationalist organizations and the struggle for socialist revolution is only possible outside these organizations and with a fierce struggle against them and against their nationalist policies." "All the actions of the EAM in Greece were deeply reactionary. [...] By killing Germans they (the EAM) gave rise to brutal measures by the occupation authorities against the population. [...] ELAS ... was reactionary in its internal structure. [...] The "December Uprising", Dekemvriana, the armed confrontation between the British occupiers and the Greek monarchists on one side and the ELAS on the other. - (Decembris) began because of the Stalinist bureaucracy, military praetorian elements and rebel commanders, who were interested in... in revenge for the countless crimes they had committed throughout the country. [...] ELAS not only intervened to prevent a wider and more rapid development of the mass movement, but also suppressed the mass movement. [...] Workers have never faced more barbaric terrorism than that imposed by the EAM. [...] The one who holds the masses back, the one who does not allow them to develop all their activity and all their free militancy, is the Stalinist Party. We must break this brake." " [...] Our main political slogans in our daily struggle: Peace without annexations and reparations. Withdrawal of occupation troops from Germany, Italy, etc. [...] Our Party does not fight against the British or for their removal. [...] 'People's Democracy' ... is the last means used by the bourgeoisie to prevent the seizure of power by the masses. [...] The Stalinist party uses, as December and the Spanish experience have shown, purely fascist methods against the revolutionary masses. [...] The proletarian party (i.e., the Trotskyites - author's note) must at the same time organize self-defense groups against Stalinist gangsters. [...] The CPG does not threaten the status of private property, on the contrary, it defends it and is therefore formally and essentially the party of the Greek bourgeoisie."*

The Trotskyists employed the following tactics: using the slogan of the socialist revolution and showing the tactics of the CPG as "ambiguous", they essentially supported German-Italian and then Anglo-American imperialism and its intervention in Greece. They supported the offensive of the bourgeoisie against the EAM and then the DCE. Not a word was said about the bourgeois army and the terrorism of the ruling class. Fighting the EAM, ELAS and CPG was the main task of the Trotskyists during and after the occupation.

This attitude explains the reasons for the political bankruptcy of Trotskyism in Greece, and its prolonged crisis both during the occupation and after the war, which ultimately led to the disappearance of its influence. Trotskyism in Greece faced one of the most serious ideological and political crises during its existence in the country. It is therefore not surprising that the Trotskyists are seen as traitors by the

armed popular movement during the occupation and civil war.

Recently, various publications have appeared which aim to glorify the Trotskyists as victims of “Stalinism” in Greece. These efforts are part of a general anti-communist campaign to revise history, which seeks to turn a criminal into a victim and vice versa, to justify even the actions of Nazis and collaborators. The period of occupation and civil war is a critical period for the ruling class of our country; it was the only moment in the history of the 20th century when they were in danger of losing power, when the ground trembled under their feet.

“Historical pluralism,” which emerged as a result of counter-revolutionary events in Europe at the end of the 20th century, is in fact anti-communist slander and distortion. The anti-communist nature and role of Trotskyism made it useful to the ruling class of our country, and for that it is praised.

It is ridiculous to watch the CPG being accused of “betraying the revolution” in various Trotskyist group papers, when in reality it was the Trotskyists who were against the people.

## Trotskyism Today

Trotskyism has been a divisive movement despite constant attempts to form caricatures of the International (“the 4th International”, etc.). Today there are various groups that are characterized as Trotskyist, as well as groups that agree with their theoretical positions and move around the “common tradition” of which Trotskyism is a part. The starting point for further splits in “traditional” Trotskyist groups and the formation of so-called “neo-Trotskyism” was the 1950s, when Tony Cliff formulated his theory of “state capitalism” (referring to the nature of the state structure of the USSR), while Trotsky characterized the Soviet Union as a “deformed workers’ state”. At the core of “neo-Trotskyism” is the “International Socialist Tendency”, created in 1977. There are also similar Trotskyist groups at the international level, which include almost all groups that act as Trotskyist on the level of a single country.

The history of the Trotskyists in France in the 1950s-70s and today is illustrative. Various Trotskyist groups have close ties to Social Democracy, and are the “cradle of cadres,” such as Lionel Jospin. They were so extensively anti-communist that Le Monde described them as a “leftist anti-communist current”.

These days the Trotskyites, taking advantage of the opportunist rebirth of the FCP, are claiming a larger role, obtaining a considerable number of votes in various elections. They criticize the FCP, while taking care of good relations with right-wing elements in it and in the WCT, declaring their commitment to the bourgeois system and their intentions to participate in centre-left coalitions. It is indicative that one of their main groups, the “League of Communist- Revolutionaries”, in collaboration with the second main group, the “Workers’ Struggle”, has removed from its program the goal of “conquering the dictatorship of the proletariat”, characterizing it as “Stalinist”.

There are various marginal Trotskyist groups in Greece: “Revolutionary Workers’ Party”, “Organization of the Communist Internationalists of Greece”, “Communist Union – Workers’ Power”, “Start”, etc. The Socialist Workers’ Party (formerly the Socialist Revolutionary Organization) is stronger. Their activity manifests itself mainly through the distribution of their newspaper. Many of their activists appear in the bourgeois press. According to their positions and ideological-political attributes they can be classified as Neo-Trotskyists.

The Socialist Workers Party is the Greek section of the International Socialist Trend. It is probably the largest in Europe, after the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). It was formed by a group of students who ended up in London in 1967 after the establishment of the Black Colonels regime. They were initially influenced by Maoism and formed a political organization called the "Socialist Revolutionary Organization". During their stay in London, the organization came into contact with Tony Cliff's International Socialists, after which they fell under the influence of Trotskyism. By the time the Organization's activists returned to Greece, their contact with the International Socialists had been lost, but resumed in the early 1980s. By then, the latter had already renamed itself the "Socialist Workers'

Party". In the late 1990s, the renaming of the organization to the "Socialist Workers Party" followed. In the 1970s they published a magazine called "The Nodding Woman", later on and to this day the PSA publishes the newspaper "Workers Solidarity" and the magazine "Socialism from Below". The SRS was on the rise from 1989 to 1993 (i.e., during the coups and the victory of the counter-revolution in the countries of socialism - author's note), since then it has fallen into a long crisis and half-dead state (which cannot be observed without considering the reorganization of class forces in our country). In 2001, there was a split in the PSA. One part formed the "Internationalist Workers' Left" (IWL), which is ideologically and politically linked to the American section of the tendency, and which also split. The IWL participated in the formation of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and the coalition of the SIN (Coalition of the Left Forces) party.

The presence of the PSA in our country is to a large extent determined by the transfer to Greece, without changing the positions and activities of the English PSA. One has only to look at the website of the PSA, and the borrowing not only of the basic ideological principles, but even of the slogans and the form, and it becomes evident at once. Their main activity was to distribute a newspaper and organize weekly discussions. In essence, it is an organization without a political program -at least a published one- that reduces "socialist work" to activism.

There is no strategy, only general and abstract propaganda for the revolution and socialism. In those mass organizations (e.g., trade unions, clubs, etc.) in which they have some influence, they support any activity and participate in the activities adopted by some "Social Forum" or "International Socialist Tendency". They do not develop specific demands and goals for the struggle, focusing only on forms of struggle. That is, it is not the demands of strikes, demonstrations or seizures of buildings that matter to them, but the actions themselves to which they attach a "revolutionary character", regardless of their political orientation.

## **Common features of Trotskyist groups**

The main Trotskyist groups in Greece and internationally, despite private differences, have the following common features:

### **1. References to Trotsky**

Trotskyists defend Trotsky's political path. They express various Trotskyist positions eclectically, not as a system of political thought (which it is not). They selectively refer to Lenin and his works in order to show that Trotsky was a continuator of Lenin's work. They contrast Lenin and Stalin. They reproduce all anti-Stalinist arguments.

## 2. Anti-socialist propaganda

They deny the achievements of socialism in the 20th century in the Soviet Union and in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They regard its overthrow as social progress and support all the counter-revolutionary actions to restore capitalism that have unfolded in the former socialist countries, calling them “people’s revolutions”.

For example, the Socialist Workers’ Party of Greece and the political literature of the MST, the international organization to which it belongs, welcome anti-communist coups and call them “popular movements” and “popular uprisings”. This is how they describe even the actions in which the CIA and former officials of capitalist states have confessed to direct and indirect participation.

They reproduce all anti-communist and anti-Soviet propaganda. Thus, the 593rd issue of the SRP’s newspaper “Rabochaya Solidarnost” reported:

“Stalin’s Russia was, on paper, irreconcilable fascism. “The USSR,” Hobsbawm writes, “was popular mainly because of its consistent opposition to Nazi Germany, which presented it as so unlike the wavering West... However, in August 1939, ‘irreconcilable’ Russia concluded a secret agreement with Germany. The infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact ‘gave’ the Soviet Union the Baltic States and ‘divided’ Poland between the two countries. In September 1939, when German troops entered Western Poland, Stalin’s ‘Red Army’ entered Eastern Poland.

Within a month Poland ceased to exist. It took the ‘Barbarossa’ plan, a sudden German attack on Russia in June 1941, for Stalin to move to the side of the ‘allies’.”

With the help of such slander, they try to nullify the decisive role of the USSR in the struggle against fascism, as well as the contribution of the communist movement to the victory of peoples over Axis imperialism, thereby justifying the role of the capitalist states in strengthening fascism in Europe.

They adhere to the imperialist propaganda that the socialist countries of Eastern Europe emerged only as a result of the advance of Soviet troops. Thus, they say:

“In the countries of Eastern Europe, as in the ‘German Democratic Republic’..... there was no workers’ revolution anywhere... They were taken over by Stalin’s troops advancing on Berlin in

1944-45. Then the new map of Europe was officially recognized during the cynical division of spheres of influence by the ‘Allies’ at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. No one asked the workers of Poland if they wanted to be in the Russian ‘sphere of influence’, just as no one asked the workers of Greece if they wanted British and American ‘protectors’.”

Here they equate two diametrically opposed manifestations of international class solidarity. On the one hand, the solidarity of international capital with the Anglo-American invasion of our country, on the other hand, the assistance of the USSR and the Red Army in the construction of socialism in Central and Eastern Europe, and the positive effect it had on the workers of these countries and the rest of the world.

As a consequence of their concept of “state capitalism” in the USSR and in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, they consider the confrontation between socialism and capitalism from 1945 to 1989 as an intra-imperialist conflict:

“The Warsaw Pact was not ‘a force opposed to American imperialism,’ as the leftist Stalinists of the era claimed, it was a rival imperialist camp that suppressed and

robbed 'its' people just as NATO suppressed and robbed 'its' people."

Such views reinforce bourgeois ideology and propaganda about the supposed failure to build socialism.

### **3. Cooperation with Social Democracy**

There is abundant historical evidence, especially in Greece and Europe, of an explicit and implicit connection between the Trotskyists and Social Democracy as a result of the "entryism" tactics they used. Trotskyist activities contributed both to the formation of the necessary "leftist" profile of social-democratic parties, and to the "leftist" anti-communist orientation of these parties. Today, Trotskyism interacts with the social-democratic parties in various ways. Many social-democratic parties have had (and still have) Trotskyist tendencies within their parties, for example, in Greece the Trotskyist group "Start" published its newspaper under the title "Start - PASOK Marxist Tendency".

Over the years, they have supported social democratic parties such as PASOK in Greece, the Labour Party in Britain, especially during periods when the labor movement had great illusions about the nature and role of the social democrats. The Trotskyists have embellished and are embellishing their collaboration with revolutionary phrases, urging the people to vote for PASOK, while at the same time talking about the revolution and socialism, putting forward "theories" that revolutionaries do not give a damn about elections.

Today, the outspoken position of the Social Democrats - as a bourgeois political party - forces the Trotskyists to distance themselves from them and change their tactics.

In spite of this, they are "natural" allies of the conformist social-democratic trade union leaders, supporting their tactics against the working class. The SRS and the rest of the Trotskyist groups take part in rallies and events organized by the conformist leaders of the GCEE (All Greek Confederation of Workers) and ADEDI (All Greek Confederation of Public Sector Workers) in the name of working-class "unity" and "working with the masses".

These forces fight against the tactics of the CPG in the trade-union movement, and against the support it gives to the unions in PAME (All-Workers' Militant Front), reproducing the accusations of sectarianism, isolationism, and divisiveness in the CPG. The choice to enter into confrontation with "PAME" objectively plays into the hands of the pro-government "Kompanion" trade union activity.

Consider, for example, how they commented on the performance of the Kompanion unions at the May 11, 2005 strike: "An impressive number of demonstrators gathered on the Champ de Mars," commenting on the position of the GCEE-ADEDI conciliatory leadership: "Although the GCEE and ADEDI leaders hesitated and did not agree on a mutual solution to the government challenge, people felt the challenge and gave the message that they would not submit or lay down their arms."

The GCEE-ADEDI leaders are not "gutless" or "hesitant": they consciously support the policy of capitalist reform, the strategy of capital. Their role is to manoeuvre, and to emasculate and reconcile the sentiments of the workers, while cementing their loyalty to the policies of the Social-Democrats.

In this direction, the Trotskyites and the current right-wing opportunists of the Coalition of Left and Environmental Movements (CIN) provide a great service by

reproducing illusions about a “militant and leftist PASOK”, by presenting the GCEE and ADEDI leaders as defenders of working-class unity, by concealing their subversive role in the trade-union movement.

## **4. Supporting various forms of adjustment to the capitalist system**

Trotskyist groups are the main supporters of the “Social Forums”. They believe that through such structures the subject of the “world revolution” and its coordination is formed. Various Trotskyist tendencies claim a leading role in these structures, considering them to be proof of their position on the priority of the struggle on the international level, and the diminution of the role of the struggle on the national level. The theories about “new movements” as opposed to the “outdated” ones associated with the communist movement, and the fierce anti-communism of these structures in the form of anti-Stalinism create favourable conditions for the Trotskyists’ activities. They claim to be the “left” and “revolutionary” wing in such structures of

adjustment to the capitalist system, dominated by social democracy and representatives of the regulation of capitalism. With “revolutionary” phraseology, they defuse popular discontentment, mainly among the inexperienced sections of the working class, the youth, and the petty bourgeoisie and include them in the structures of accommodation.

They follow the traditional line of opportunists and social democrats, the policy of compromise and cooperation within the “anti-war movement” with one of the imperialist centres in a struggle against the other (for example, against U.S. domination within so-called “globalization”). Their role increased during the third “European Social Forum” held in London, under the aegis of the London City Hall, sponsored by the Guardian newspaper and with the responsibility of organizing the anonymous company “European Social Forum - London 2005 COO”; they also claimed this role at the fourth EUF in Athens.

There are systemic attempts to create structures in which communist (or communist-derived) forces coexist with Trotskyists and social-democrats, under the umbrella of opportunism. The Trotskyites have a positive attitude towards formation of the “Party of European Left”, moreover, the Trotskyites in Great Britain are members of the electoral coalition “Respect” of former Labour deputy Galahuei, who applied to join the Party of European Left. The following evaluation is characteristic: “The first PEL Congress ended on Sunday, October 30. It was an impressive event in terms of the number of participants. Party representatives and invitees from almost every left-wing party in Europe attended the congress. There was a feeling everywhere that after the French and Dutch said no to the European Constitution and after the results of the elections in Germany, something new was born.”

## **5. Attitude towards the imperialist structure of the EU**

A characteristic feature of all Trotskyist groups is the almost complete absence of the identification of the European Union as imperialist. This topic is presented in their documents in a very limited way. Moreover, in the past, they actively attacked the CHRG for its position against the EU, believing that this position was nationalistic, expressing the interests of the Greek bourgeoisie seeking a more favourable place in the system of international imperialism.

The question of the struggle against the EU is not raised anywhere, because such a goal is connected with the Leninist – and not Trotskyist – analysis of imperialism, with the Leninist theory of uneven development, with the theory of the “weak link” of imperialism, and the possibility of starting and accomplishing a revolution in one country. On the other hand, the creation of the European Union is seen by various Trotskyist currents as a field of class struggle, and this fact defends their position of the transition of the class struggle from the national to the regional level, and their theory of world revolution.

However, Trotsky himself was one of the main founders of the “United States of Europe” slogan, influenced by Kautsky’s “ultra-imperialism”. Lenin rejected this slogan in “On the Slogan ‘United States of Europe’”, clearly stating that the adoption of such a slogan would mean rejecting the law of uneven development, and the possibility of socialism succeeding in one country.

At the same time, their support and active and energetic participation in the European Social Forums, and support for the slogan “Another Europe is possible” classifies them as apologists for European imperialism. It makes them a part of modern European social chauvinism, which is expressed through an attempt to support the European imperialist centre as an opponent of the USA.

## **6. Attacks on the Communist movement**

All contemporary Trotskyist groups, acting systemically as an anti-communist force – which is historically characteristic of the Trotskyist current – describe themselves as Marxists and refer to the classics of Marxism, using the terms “revolution” and “socialism”. Their anti-communism in Greece is accompanied by “friendly attacks” on the Communist Party, mainly on its members and activists. The friendly attacks consist of glorifying ordinary members and supporters of the party as fighters, and, at the same time, as politically uneducated elements following the policies of the “reformist” CHR.G. In an attempt to confuse them, they do not hesitate to flatter members of the CPG and KMG (Communist Youth of Greece) for choosing to participate in the organized struggle, calling them “comrades”, etc. Their ideological eclecticism serves the same tactic. They cite the classics of Marxism, taken out of context, either to support their theses or to attack the CPG. The main elements of their criticism against the CPG and the KMG are as follows:

The attempt to prove that the entire historical path of the party is a path of betrayal by the leadership of the party at its grassroots, the masses who follow the party.

Beginning with the EAM, the December Uprising, the DSE, the July events and the uprising of the Polytechnic University up to the present day, they reproduce the pattern of confrontation between the grassroots and the party leadership. They cite the “Stalinist-reformist line” as the reason for the “treacherous position” of the CPG. In general, they believe that the line of the Communist movement of the 20s and 30s is responsible for the defeat of the revolutions in Europe, for the rise of fascism, etc.

They deliberately distort the policy of the CPG. They repeat the line of PASOK’s argument that the CPG collaborated with New Democracy (ND). It is not the individual issues, but the essence of the party’s policy that are in their crosshairs: its attitude to the Forums, to opportunism, its tactics against the conformist trade-union leaderships, its position on the experience of socialism in the 20th century, etc. Thus, they attribute to the CPG that “its position on major struggles is negative,” that the Party and Komsomol leadership “treats in a sectarian and conservative way the movements which inspire thousands of young people and strive to build a better world.”

The position on the need for “leftist unity” is one of the main “friendly attacks” of the Trotskyists (especially the IRL, which belongs to SYRIZA) and the SRS in relation to the CPG and the KMG. As already mentioned, the Trotskyists have always sought to play the role of a “link” between the revolutionary current and opportunism, though they do not acknowledge this in their texts. Therefore, the SRS criticizes the IND for fearfulness and defeatism, but not for the policy of the IND itself:

“A new Left is possible, and it can express this dynamic and become a headache for Karamanlis as well as for Papandreas’ dehydrated opposition. She need only to leave behind her sectarianism, which for so many years has been the hallmark of the CPG leadership. Indeed, even now, the Rizospastis (the central organ of the Communist Party - note PS) does nothing but attack the German left. All it takes is for the leadership of the SIN to part with its defeatism. Even over the weekend, during the German elections, Alekos Alavanos urged young people not to follow the calls to ‘come and change the world,’ but to ‘meet to see if we can change something in this world.’”

Of course, they support not only an alliance of “leftist organizations,” but also an alliance with the so-called “Left Social Democracy”, which is represented in Greece by Polizogopoulos and the Kompanei trade unionists. In the end, they argue that “for the supporters of PASOK and the whole Left, there remains hope that there are people who are struggling, and that this struggle can be given political expression.”

“It is not a question of finding those who will become the left wing of PASOK, who will secede and create conditions similar to those in France, Germany and England. History does not repeat itself. The patterns of how some people disassociate and create left-wing parties don’t remain. The main thing is that the role that PASOK does not assume now, when the movement strikes, demonstrates and organizes against New Democracy, that role should be assumed by us, as we have done so far in the strikes, in Thessaloniki”

## Conclusion

To summarize, the anti-communism of the Trotskyist groups not only brings them closer to the Social Democrats and the opportunist policies of the New Left, but also to reactionary propaganda and practice. In spite of their extremely small numbers, it cannot be underestimated that their “Marxist” garb provides a “revolutionary” cover for the dominant bourgeois ideology. The bourgeoisie uses them, as do all currents of right-wing and left-wing opportunism, to subordinate the radical tendencies arising in the workers’ and youth movements.

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