Study Guide for *Trotskyism or Leninism?* by Joseph Stalin

First Edition

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This document is in the public domain; however, I would like to emphasize that I disapprove of its usage in any generative, “AI,” for any reason.

Introduction

Trotskyism or Leninism? by Joseph Stalin is an excellent follow-up to *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder* by Vladimir Lenin, providing a direct example of how the left deviation of Marxism-Leninism is inherently counter-revolutionary.

Within this document, Stalin will repeatedly highlight how Trotsky not only distorts Marxism-Leninism to no longer being Marxist-Leninist, but additionally attempts to distance himself from Lenin while maintaining the illusion of respect for Lenin, and on multiple occasions directly lies about easily verifiable information despite publicly available documents contradicting him.

While many potential readers may be immediately repulsed by the author due to neoliberal propaganda, it must be noted that we as Marxist-Leninists are *supposed* to critique other Marxist-Leninists while also *not* dogmatically discarding actually useful theory.

Joseph Stalin provides incredible contributions to Marxism-Leninism, both writing theory from his own observations, and serving as a good teacher in that he demonstrated an excellent ability to both summarize and reinforce existing Marxist-Leninist theory, much alike Vladimir Lenin was able to do with the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels before him.

As new terms come up in the document that may be unfamiliar or have experienced lingual drift, they’ll be clarified for their individual sections. Additionally, to encourage reading the document rather than seeking summaries, key takeaways for different sections will be presented as questions for the reader to answer, allowing them to seek the answers themselves and come to a greater understanding of the document.

This is unfortunately due to the fact that—while being somewhat viable as onboarding to reading Socialist theory, assuming someone is actively encouraged to learn and possibly assisted in doing so (as opposed to berated)—summarized Socialist theory significantly waters down the original documents and will only provide a rudimentary understanding.

The headings beyond this point in the document will simply denote the relevant sections of *Trotskyism or Leninism?*

Section 1: The Facts About the October Uprising

Important Context:

- This document is preceded by the briefly mentioned *Leninism or Trotskyism?* by Lev Kamenev.
- There is great irony in that this document is easily found, among many other works of Stalin, on the Marxists Internet Archive. For context, the MIA is run by Trotskyists—the singular productive thing Trotskyists have provided the world.
- Social-Democrat, despite capitalization and hyphenation, is in fact referring to social democrats as we understand them today; this is the approximate period in history wherein *social democrat* was no longer synonymous with *Marxist*.

Key Takeaways:

- Was the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party opposed to an uprising? Was the Party on the verge of a split?
- Was there a social democrat tendency in the Bolshevik Party during the October Revolution?
- Did Trotsky single-handedly lead the revolution? What was his role?
- Who inspired the October Revolution?
- What was Trotsky's response to the retreat of the Bolsheviks in Brest? How does this reflect on his viability as a Party leader?

Section 2: The Party and the Preparation for October

Important Context:

- You may notice here that Stalin specifically chooses to use the word *Allah* here. This is because the USSR was doing its best to accommodate for different religions and cultures throughout the union, and just four years prior, in 1920, Stalin gave a speech titled *Congress of the Peoples of Daghestan* regarding their right to autonomy, and verbatim stated:

  "We are told that among the Daghestan peoples the Sharia is of great importance. We have also been informed that the enemies of Soviet power are spreading rumours that it has banned the Sharia.

  "I have been authorized by the Government of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic to state here that these rumours are false. The Government of Russia gives every people the full right to govern itself on the basis of its laws and customs.

  "The Soviet Government considers that the Sharia, as common law, is as fully authorized as that of any other of the peoples inhabiting Russia."

While the USSR would unfortunately later take on a more violently anti-theist stance, during this time, the USSR had excellent relations with its religious populations, including Muslims.

Subsection 1: The period of the Party's new orientation (March–April)

Key Takeaways:

- What were the six major facts of this period? How did this affect the relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie?
- Which groups were the Contact Committee comprised of? What were its policy outcomes?
- Was Trotsky's assertion that the Bolshevik party had split correct? Why or why not?
- Did Trotsky's analysis of the situation align with Lenin's analysis? How did Lenin respond to Trotsky's analysis?
- Did Trotsky lead the revolution in Kolchak? What was his response? What was the response from the Central Committee?
- Did Trotsky lead the revolution in Denikin? What was the response from the Central Committee?

Subsection 2: The period of the revolutionary mobilization of the masses (May–August)

Key Takeaways:

- What are the nine major facts of this period? What was the primary effect of these facts?
- Was Trotsky's assertion that Lenin wanted to mass arrest the Provisional Government, and that the Central Committee dismissed this as adventurism, factual? What were the actions of Lenin and the Central Committee?
- Was Trotsky a member of the Central Committee in July 1917? How does this affect the factual character of his assertions?
- Was Trotsky's assertion that there was a right-wing bloc of the Party correct? Is there anything that refutes this?

Subsection 3: The period of organization of the assault (September–October)

Key Takeaways:

- What are the seven major facts of this period? What was its characteristic feature?

- Was Trotsky's assertion that Bolsheviks participated in the pre-Parliament for the purpose of directing people into the Marxist movement accurate? What did the Bolsheviks do under Lenin's suggestion after joining the pre-Parliament?
- How many reporters does Lentsner, Trotsky's editor, state there were for the Bolshevik meeting on the pre-Parliament? How many were present? Who favoured which decisions?
- What did Trotsky assert Lenin's instructions were on the role of the Soviets in the uprising? What were Lenin's instructions?
- What was the date that Trotsky asserted the Central Committee passed a resolution to start the uprising? Do the documents of the Central Committee on the uprising corroborate this claim? What of Lenin's discussion about the date?

Section 3: Trotskyism or Leninism?

Important Context:

- For the sake of clarity, this section shares the same title as the rest of the work, and the rest of the work is inclusive of *Trotskyism or Leninism?*
- If you're curious about what critiques of Trotsky exist from ex-Trotskyists, I recommend *Why Am I Not A Trotskyist?* by Red Star on YouTube. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqhc--SWIE8)

Key Takeaways:

- What does Trotsky do to promote Trotskyism in favour over Leninism? Why?
- What does Trotsky's interpretation of, "permanent revolution," comprise of? What was Lenin's response to this? How did Trotsky rebuke Leninism? (Note: "Permanent revolution," is a term that was coined by Karl Marx; Trotsky has performed a revisionist reinterpretation.)
- How do Trotskyist parties conflict with Marxist-Leninist parties?
- What was Trotsky's opinion of Leninism? What did he have to do with this opinion in order to participate in the October Revolution?
- Was Trotsky's assertion of unity between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks viable? Why or why not?
- How was Trotsky's interpretation of, "permanent revolution," immediately disproven?
- What is the condition for Trotskyists working within Marxism-Leninism?
- How has modern Trotskyism disguised itself? (Note: Modern Trotskyists will sometimes describe themselves as, "Marxists-and-Leninists," instead of as Marxist-Leninists.)

Subsection 1: On the question of "permanent" revolution

Key Takeaways:

- How does new Trotskyism change its idea of permanent revolution in regards to the October Revolution?
- How does new Trotskyism divide Leninism? Why? What refutes this?

Subsection 2: On the question of the Party principle

Key Takeaway:

- How does new Trotskyism divide the Bolshevik Party? How does this reflect the division of Leninism? What effect does this have?

Subsection 3: On the question of the leaders of Bolshevism

Important Context:

- The *Chinese mandarin* alluded to here refers to the mandarins of the Chinese Empire, which were bureaucratic, often pedantic, officials of the Emperor of China, and overlapped with discussion of the Chinese imperial intelligentsia, especially reactionary, traditional elders. A modern comparison would be comparing Trotsky to figures like Jordan Peterson, who have a pedantic air of intelligence, but really just regurgitate reactionary ideas to an ever-increasing mass of obedient followers.
- Blanquism is another term for putschism, i.e. a coup d'etat. Notably, a coup d'etat does not achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat. As emphasized by Karl Marx in the *Preface to the German Edition of 1872 of the Manifesto of the Communist Party*: "One thing was especially prove by the [Paris] Commune, [that is to say], that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes." This is due to the fact that the existing state is built for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and we can't use a bourgeois democracy to achieve Socialism; we must instead construct the dictatorship of the proletariat in place of the destroyed bourgeois state.

Key Takeaways:

- How does old Trotskyism's relationship with Lenin differ from new Trotskyism's relationship with Lenin?
- What were Trotsky's, "critiques," of Lenin? How are these refuted?
- What is the danger of new Trotskyism? What should Marxist-Leninists do in response?