

TOWARDS CULTURAL PROGRESS: THOUGHTS OF LEON TROTSKY ABOUT ART AND CULTURE

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“Nothing human is alien to me”, declared the Roman play writer Terence. The exceptional range and diversity of the interest of the Russian revolutionary, Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) justify its application to him quite well. Though most of his political writings belonging to the period before 1929 are not available in print now, even the available ones belonging to the period 1929-1940 are remarkable for their depth and insight. Three of them – *The Permanent Revolution*, *The Revolution Betrayed* and *In Defense of Marxism* – constitute the guiding stars of proletarian revolutionaries all over the world and deserve to be counted as the greatest contributions to revolutionary thought since Lenin. *The History of the Russian Revolution* written in three volumes is an indispensable account of the event as well as an illustration of the communist method of writing history. His military writings, speeches and Orders of the Day covered three volumes published in the Russian Philosophy, Science and Technology interested him and he wrote about them too. “*Their Morals & Ours*” written in response to John Dewey expounds Marxist position on morals. He did not neglect literature and art as evident from his book, *Literature & Revolution* and his writings collected and edited by Paul N. Siegel under the title *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art*.

It was but natural for such a versatile genius to take due note of culture. More so because he shared with Lenin the view that “nine – tenths of our work comes down to culturization – if we abstract ourselves from questions of international politics and revolution.” [Trotsky 1973: 318]

Therefore, the work of culturizing was “a fundamental revolutionary task” to him. [Trotsky 1973: 318] As a Leninist indeed, he did not fail to point out that it was simply impossible to abstract the cultural work from the national and international politics. Proceeding from that stand, he took up philosophy, science, technology, bibliography, stenography, library work, religion, social and individual psychology, literature, the role of cinema, the position and prospects of women, the purification of speech as an instrument of clear thought, mass initiative and much more and dealt with them in a realistic and flexible manner.¹

¹ Leon Trotsky (7.11.1879 – 20.8.1940) as the president of Petrograd Soviet and director of its Military Revolutionary Committee led the uprising that brought the Bolsheviks to power in Russia. He was the first Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, organizer and commander of Red Army and commissar of war (1918-25). Then he headed the Board for Electro – technical Development and the Committee for Industry and Technology. Overseeing the progress of Soviet Scientific Work, he felt like half – administrator and half – student as he put it

“The fundamental law of vulgar thought lies in the fact that it wishes to content itself with motionless imprints of reality which consists of eternal emotion. Dialectical thinking gives to concepts, by means of closer approximations, connections, concretizations, a richness of content and flexibility, I would even say a succulence which to a certain extent brings them close to living phenomena”, declared Trotsky in defense of dialectics against Max Shachtman and James Burnham.[Trotsky 1981:50]

His concern for “living phenomena” involved him deeply with the practical tasks of culture. There are “socialists” and “communists” who believe that the rule of their party plus nationalization constitutes be – all and end – all of socialism. That was not the view of the Bolsheviks. As Trotsky put it: “Socialism, after all, does not consist only in the abolition of the exploiters”, but also demands “a system of material prosperity, general security, and all – round cultured existence.” [Trotsky 1973: 189]

What stood in the way of achieving that was the cultural backwardness of Soviet Union. In his speech delivered on June 24, 1924 to the anniversary meeting of Karl Liebknecht Institute, Trotsky narrated: “it was only when the working class had taken power into its hands that it understood for the first time how poor and backward we still were or, as the Russian critic Pisarev once said, how “poor and stupid” we are. By the word stupidity here we must understand simply cultural backwardness, since by nature we are not stupid at all, and when we have had time to learn we shall stand completely by ourselves.” [Trotsky 1973: 137] While socialism demanded conscious and efficient workers, the proletariat lagged behind and faced the problems of illiteracy, alcoholism and superstitions.

Still, as the dictatorship of the proletariat could not be meaningful without the active participation of the workers in politics, the Bolsheviks could not subscribe to the “hypocritical and base nation that the army and the younger generation stand outside politics.” [Trotsky 1973: 281] Instead, Trotsky declared: “it is not possible to live outside of politics, without politics, any more than one can live without air.” [Trotsky 1973: 282] So, it was desirable to “diligently study the geography and history of Germany and of all other countries, draw the attention of the most backward working men and women to the conditions of their everyday life, and these open their minds the way on to the ground

in “*My Life*”. His speeches and writings belonging to that period expressing his views on science and culture appeared in Russian in the twenty – first volume of his ‘Collected Works’ under the title ‘Culture in Traditional Epoch in 1927 – the last of his writings published in the USSR under the official imprimatur. Earlier in 1923, a collection of his articles was published in English under the title *Problems of Everyday Life* which makes up the first nine chapters of the collection published under the same title by Menad Press, New York in 1973.

Trotsky was expelled from the party towards the end of 1927 and exiled to Alma Ata. In 1929 he was deported to Turkey. In 1932 he was deprived of Soviet nationality. Though admitted to France and then Norway for a short period, practically every country in Europe denied asylum to him. During these critical years of his exile occurred the Moscow Trials (1936-38) that ended in the execution of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Bukharin and other eminent leaders on false charges. Trotsky was granted asylum in Mexico. Ramon Mercader, an agent of the Soviet Secret Police assassinated him there on 20 August 1940. CPSU under Gorbachov rehabilitated many victims of Stalin but could not condone the sin of Trotsky, namely, his devotion to the cause of world revolution, the cause for which the committee was founded in 1919.

revolutionary road.” [Trotsky 1973: 133] Socialist construction requires efficient and honest workers. Political education is not enough for that, technical education is also needed. As the working class sets itself a task ignored by the bourgeoisie, the task of subordinating the economic principles of social conditions to a central and to a conscious order as a means of ‘transforming morals’ [Trotsky 1973: 29], it becomes all the more imperative.

Textbooks for political as well as technical education, therefore, became the need of the hour. Trotsky noted that no book was useful for everyone. “There must be a correlation between the reader’s personal experience, general level of development, and abilities, on the one hand, and the level of coverage of Leninism provided by the book.” [Trotsky 1973: 295]

“People writing for the working class are expected to write in a popular style avoiding foreign words to the extent possible and using known and understood abbreviation only. But it would be naïve to expect that it would be possible to remove all the difficulties thereby. “*Capital* cannot be written in a more popular style than Marx used if the subject is to be treated in all its depth. Lenin’s philosophical work on empiriomonism cannot be developed in a more popular style either. What is the solution? To come to these books through a series of intermediate steps; this is the only way to get to understand; there is not and cannot be any other way.” [Trotsky 1973: 295, 296]

Turning to the technical education, Trotsky found that new technical text books were few and very difficult to get. They were published at random by different publishers or state department without any general plan. Moreover, they were not always satisfactory. New text books were needed to introduce new techniques, new methods, new habits in the industrial life. He offered the following solution to the problem: “The joint work of, say, three authors is necessary to write, or at least to edit, a handbook. There should be a specialist with a thorough technical training, one who knows the conditions of our present production in a given trade or is able to get the necessary information; the other two should include a highly qualified worker of that particular trade, one who is interested in production, and if possible has some inventive aptitudes; and a professional writer, a Marxist, a politician with industrial and technical interests and knowledge.” [Trotsky 1973: 22]

The goal of education, the Bolsheviks held, was the harmonious development of man. How could that be achieved? Trotsky said, we “are striving for the reconciliation of physical and mental labour, which is the only thing that can be harmonious development of man. Such is our program. ... In this field, as in many others, we shall go and are going already by way of experience, research and experiments, knowing only the general direction of the road to the goal: as correct as possible a combination of physical and mental labour.” [Trotsky 1973: 136-137]

Elementary steps in the education of the deprived classes in a backward country are the eradication of illiteracy, alcoholism and superstition. Exploiters nowhere seek to do that honestly as their perpetuation suits them serving their ends. Trotsky, in an order to the Red Army and Red Navy dated May 26, 1923 declared: “The struggle with illiteracy is the first step in the great struggle against poverty, dirt, coarseness, and all the rest of the inheritance of slavery. Let us remember this everyday and hour!” [Trotsky 1973: 105] Female illiteracy was a matter of even more concern in Russia as it is in India today. Many decrees issued by the

Bolsheviks remained on paper and women suffered. The problem stemmed “from illiteracy, from a feeling of defenselessness” which was rooted “in the inability to look into things, read widely, make complaints, consult the right sources.” [Trotsky 1973: 153-154]

And this is what Trotsky thought about alcoholism: “For the working masses the struggle against alcoholism is a struggle for physical, spiritual and most of all revolutionary survival Forcing its way into the daily life of the worker, alcohol snatches a large share of wage earnings and in this way undercuts the advance of culture.” [Trotsky 1973:174] That is a befitting reply to the wise folk in India who do not deem it worthwhile to risk their popularity by opposing alcoholism.

Education is not worth the name if it ignores or reconciles with superstition. Trotsky observed, “the education of revolutionists must, above all mean their emancipation from all legacies of ignorance and superstition, which are frequently preserved even in very sensitive consciousness. And therefore, we show irreconcilable opposition to anyone who dares to suggest that mysticism or religious sentiment and frames of mind might be compatible with communism.” [Trotsky 1973: 111-112] However, he was ever mindful of reality and took a flexible approach in the respect of the backward countries in the East like Turkestan and Azerbaizhan. “Of course, it would be better if we had a proletariat that had rejected the old prejudices and only then come to communism. But the East is lacking in all the previous schooling. There the party is the elementary school, and it must fulfill its responsibility accordingly. We will admit into our ranks those comrades who have yet to break with religion Rather tactfully but persistently to free the backward members’ consciousness of superstition, which in its very essence is the mental enemy of communism.” [Trotsky 1973: 119]

Who were to carry out the task of education? Besides, formal educational institutions, newspapers, libraries, worker’s clubs and cinema could become the instruments of enlightenment. Besides, Red Army and Red Navy could do the job in the rural areas during their vacation. Trotsky took pains to explain it at length in his several speeches and writings. He viewed “the newspaper not as an organ telling us about this and that, but as the worker’s instrument of education, as a weapon of knowledge and skill, as a direct, daily, practical expression of Leninism in political and economic activity.” [Trotsky 1973: 149-150] Again, “the newspaper is not only for the peasant but for the worker who is blind, when geographical terms are only names to him, when he doesn’t know and cannot imagine the sizes and respective positions of France, England, America, Germany.” [Trotsky 1973:150]

In order to fulfill their task effectively, the newspapers have to know what the masses want and express in a way that is comprehensible to them. Trotsky emphasized both the points. Thus, he wrote: “A newspaper does not have the right not to be interested in what the masses, the people in the streets are interested in what. Of course, our newspaper can and must throw light on facts, since it is called upon to educate, elevate, develop. But it will only reach the goal if it starts off from facts, thoughts, and moods that really effect the mass reader.” [Trotsky 1973: 126] In order to become useful for the semi – literate workers and peasants, the press had to avoid slovenliness and blurring of the print, avoid abbreviations, rework

dispatches explaining the geographical and historical context and provide at least weekly summary of events. [Trotsky 1973:126]

At the same time, the press was expected to be free from conceit “all past parties, particularly the petty – bourgeois democratic parties, have harbored illusions, concealing the gaps and contradictions in their own program and their own work from themselves. The bourgeois democratic parties cannot live without illusions.” [Trotsky 1973: 173] There can be no room for such practices in case of communists. That is why Trotsky objected strongly against it when a paper falsely reported that the Russian rubber was found “not in any way inferior to a foreign rubber, and in some cases was even superior to it.” In a speech published in Pravda, Jan’20, 1926 he said: “to deceive yourself, to deceive public opinion, means to ruin the cause of socialism. Naturally, people will offer thousands of arguments in justification for such things. They will say that we mustn’t let the outside world know of our shortcomings, that this matter has a military significance, and so forth. Rubbish! – We are deceiving ourselves. And by so doing we are ruining the cause of socialist construction.” [Trotsky 1973: 191-192] Workers’ clubs were the other instruments of education. They appeared first in 1905 as educational and recreational institutions but were suppressed by the craziest regime. In 1917, they were retrieved at many factories and plants. Funded by the trade unions, they were formally independent with administrative boards elected at general meetings. They included at least a library, an eating room and a lecture hall. Though the clubs were based on the principle of total and unconditional voluntariness, Trotsky laid stress on the desirability of improving their attendance and activity to enable them to fulfill their role well as a “part of educational system.”

Trotsky expected a lot from library worker than the job they do in the bourgeois countries. “And that library worker is not a library worker of a socialist country if he is simply in charge of a shelf of books and so does not manage to listen to the requests of his readers and serve as an organ of transmission what he has heard to higher bodies – to bring pressure on the writers and publishers.” [Trotsky 1973: 153] Only an interaction between the library worker and the reader could improve the quality of publication and lead to the production of what was needed but not available. Besides the library worker had to play the role of a social worker: “Build a bureau of complaints in the libraries, create conditions in which every peasant, male or female – and first and foremost those who fear the Soviet Official – will feel he can consult the librarian, the “izbach”, without feeling he will be let down or have a dirty trick played on him, a librarian will advise him, write to a newspaper, make public his grievance, defend him.” [Trotsky 1973:154] Such advice given in a speech on June 24, 1924 was published in Pravda, July 10, 1924. Three years later, such activity became treason in USSR. Favoring freedom in education, Trotsky wrote in 1938: “The task of cultural education consists in awakening and developing the critical personality among the oppressed and downtrodden masses. The indispensable condition for this is that the educator himself must possess a personality developed in the critical sense.” [Trotsky 1973: 195]

Referring to the condition of the USSR under Stalinism, he observed: “The Soviet bureaucracy which has done violence to Revolution wants the people to consider it infallible. It is to the school teacher that it has entrusted the task of deceiving the people as priests do.

To stifle the voice of criticism, it has introduced the totalitarian system into education in workers' trade unions. The public functionaries put at the head of unions wage a furious campaign of slanders and repression against educators with a critical mind accusing them of being counter revolutionaries, "Trotskyists" and "Fascists". Those who do not yield, the GPU suppresses. What is more, the Soviet bureaucracy is striving to extend the same system to the whole world." [Trotsky 1973: 196] What service such practices rendered to the cause of socialism is now obvious to anyone.

Cultural progress begins with education but includes art and literature too. To promote them, it is desirable to permit them freedom. Trotsky wrote the following in this respect: "The party is obliged to permit a very extensive liberty in the field of art, eliminating pitilessly only that which is directed against the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat. On the other hand, the party cannot assure an immediate and direct responsibility for the declaration of its various members in the field of art, even when it accords them its tribune. The maintenance of these two rules – the preservation of the liberty necessary for individual creation, and non assignment to the party of the responsibility for all its roads – is especially obligatory in those cases where it is a question not of theoreticians in the field of art, but the artists themselves "men of letters, etc." [Trotsky 1973: 320]

Cultural uplift does not mean or rest on denial of amusements. The sociologist in Trotsky did not fail to observe that the "longing for amusement, distraction, sight – seeing, and the laughter is the most legitimate desire of human nature." [Trotsky 1973: 32] Again, he noted that the monotonous life of the working family "wears out the nervous system. Hence, comes the desire for alcohol – a small flask containing a whole world of images. Hence, comes the need for church and her ritual." [Trotsky 1973: 44]

So, the remedy lies not in the negation but in giving "the satisfaction of this desire a higher artistic reality, at the same time making amusement a weapon of collective education, freed from the guardianship of the pedagogue and the tiresome habit of moralizing." It is futile to attempt to destroy meaningless ritual which lies on the consciousness like an inert burden by criticism alone, "it can be supplanted by new forms of life, new amusements, new and more cultured theatres." [Trotsky 1973: 35] The cinema can prove the most powerful and the most democratic instrument in this respect, he suggested.

Rationalistic criticism of ceremony has limited appeal and we cannot rid society of superstition if we rely solely upon them. "Theoretical arguments act on the mind only. Spectacular ceremony acts on the senses and imagination." [Trotsky 1973: 45] So it was desirable to oppose old practices by new forms, new symbols. The Bolsheviks in Russia had began new ceremonies of the state – festivals, processions, reviews, parades etc. which were novel, distinct and forcible but the new practices had not penetrated the domain of the family. Trotsky noticed it and remarked: "The creation of the revolutionary "ceremonial" of custom (we use the word "ceremonial" for want of a better), and setting it against the "ceremonial" of the church is possible not only on public or state occasions, but in the relationship of family." It could be done by naming children linking up with the revolution, celebrating birthday in a secular way, by substituting cremation which "does not mean giving up processions, speech –

making, marches, the rifle salute. The need for an outer manifestation of emotion is strong and legitimate.” [Trotsky 1973: 46]

In family relations, Trotsky laid stress on the equality of sexes: “.... Unless there is actual equality in the family, in a normal sense as well as in the conditions of life, we cannot speak seriously of their equality in social work or even in politics. As long as woman is chained to her house work, the care of the family, the cooking and sewing, all her chances of participation in social and cultural life are cut down in the extreme.” [Trotsky 1973: 38] A new, higher type of family could not develop without raising the standard of the culture of the individual working man and woman.

Even the parents in a healthy family are not expected to exercise despotic powers over their ward. Referring to an incident in Piathiagorsk, where a young girl of seventeen had shot herself because her mother refused to consent to her marriage with a Red Army commander, Trotsky wrote in 1923: “Parents naturally, have a right to interest themselves in the fate of their children and to influence their fate by their experience and advice; but young people are under no obligation to submit to their parents, particularly in their choice of a friend or a partner of life. The despotism of parents must not be combated by suicide, but by rallying of the young, by mutual support, and so on. It is all very elementary, but perfectly true.” [Trotsky 1973: 69]

The Bolsheviks were not satisfied with giving all political and legal rights to woman. To achieve their real liberation, they aimed at complete absorption of the house – keeping functions of the family by institutions of the socialist society (Social dining rooms, social laundries, maternity houses, crèches etc.). But the society was poor and little cultured. Backwardness and poverty made it possible for a privileged stratum, the bureaucracy, to usurp power while the social institutions like social dining rooms, social laundries, crèches etc. began to decline by 1935. Mass homelessness of children and prostitution rose. While the Bolsheviks had made abortion legal, it was prohibited on June 27, 1936. Divorce became difficult. Trotsky analyzed all these developments at length in the first section of the seventh chapter of *The Revolution Betrayed* and characterized it as “a retreat to bourgeois models.” [Trotsky 1965: 157]

Trotsky had a different conception of socialism than most of the “socialists” and “communists” in India. “Socialism, if it is worthy of the name, means human relations without greed, friendship without envy and intrigue, love without base calculation.” [Trotsky 1965: 155] That is why he treated all the social relations and behavior, great and small, carefully.

Whatever the color of the government, the bureaucracy enjoys the privilege of ignoring, harassing, insulting and injuring the masses. They are hardly taken to task for their mischief lest it affect their morale. Trotsky thought otherwise. He wanted to “attain a condition in which the average colorless individual of the working masses will cease to fear the government departments he has to come into contact with.” [Trotsky 1973: 50] For that proper education of the Soviet bureaucrat was required. Moreover, he advised an exemplary “calendar program”: “..... Single out a hundred of civil servants who showed a rooted contempt in their duties for the working masses, and publicly, perhaps by trial, chuck them

out of the state machine, so that they could never come back again. It would be a good beginning.” [Trotsky 1973: 51] At the time, it was naïve to hope that everything will be okay even if people remain passive. For example, printing and publishing in the USSR was not up to the mark because the readers were not sufficiently exacting. [Trotsky 1973: 62] Awareness and active role of the workers alone could bring the bureaucrats to senses. [Trotsky 1973: 64] As early as 1921, Trotsky in an article published in *PRAVDA* wrote the following: “We are poor, but we are wasteful. We are sloppy. We are slovenly, these vices have deep roots in our slavish past and can be eradicated only gradually by means of persistent propaganda by deed, by example, and by illustration – and by means of careful control, vigilance and persistent exactitude.” [Trotsky 1973: 76] So it was necessary to combat trifles which “accumulating and combining can constitute something great – or destroy something great.” [Trotsky 1973: 74] A person who splits or drops cigarette butts on the floor or spits is not only untidy but “shows a lack of respect for the work of others. Those who have no respect for the work of others are careless in their own work.” [Trotsky 1973: 75] Even a carefully considered battle plan will come to naught if it arrives late or if it is copied incorrectly or read carelessly. “Whoever is true in the small matters will also be true in great ones.” [Trotsky 1973: 76] Precision or accuracy was the other quality he valued, a quality of great economic and cultural significance that the Russian lacked due to historical reasons. In an article published in *IZVESTIA* on Dec. 23, 1921, he wrote: “Accuracy or preciseness is a virtue that is gradually acquired and conserved as a criterion of economic and cultural development for a people, a class, or even an individual. And what we are lacking most of all is precision.” [Trotsky 1973: 93]

Dignitaries in almost all the backward countries deem it their birthright to keep common folk waiting for them. Coming late as a rule is one of the ways to demonstrate their importance. Such practices prevailed in Russia too and Trotsky was highly critical of it. Thus, he wrote in an article published in *PRAVDA* on August 14, 1923: “A man who is always late because he is ‘frightfully busy’, works as a rule less and less efficiently than another who comes on time wherever he is due.” [Trotsky 1973: 62]

“Liquidation of pre – bourgeois barbarism” as he called it, was an important part of cultural work the Bolsheviks had before them. He wrote in 1924: “In fact, as far as rudeness, foul language, bribe – taking, and so forth are concerned, we are recipients of a terrible legacy from czarist Russia, which on questions of culture lagged behind then European states for many decades and in some respects for centuries.” [Trotsky 1973: 173] So these matters could not be taken lightly.

The question of bad language is not a matter of trifle to Trotsky because “men who use bad language scorn women, and have no regard for children.” [Trotsky 1973: 55-56] Abusive language and swearing express despair and embitterment in case of the oppressed, while in case of the upper classes there are “outcome of class rule, slave owner’s pride, unshakable power.” [Trotsky 1973: 52] Moreover, Trotsky pointed out the need of restoring purity, clearness, beauty, precision and correctness of language. Use of faulty words and expressions must be avoided. For example, “a pair of shoes” is the correct expression but “a pair of

weeks” and “a pair of months” are stupid and ugly as the real meaning of the word “pair” is lost in such expressions.” [Trotsky 1973: 55-56]

Trotsky’s contribution to the theory of culture is also remarkable. Let us begin with his definition of culture, “Culture is the sum total of all knowledge and skills amassed by mankind throughout all its preceding history Knowledge of everything that surrounds us, that we may change everything that surrounds us – change it in the interests of mankind Knowledge grows out of the activities of man, out of his struggle with the forces of nature, knowledge serves to improve these activities, to spread the methods of combating each obstacles, and to increase the power of man.” [Trotsky 1973: 143] Again, “Culture is everything that has been created, built, learned, conquered by man in the course of his entire history, in distinction from what nature has given.” [Trotsky 1973: 227]

There are two aspects of culture according to Trotsky: material culture and spiritual culture. The former comprises material achievements like tools, machinery, buildings, monuments, and so on and includes methods, habits, skills, acquired abilities which have developed out of pre – existing material and improved upon it as well. Thus, technology is a valuable part of material culture. Spiritual culture as inherited from the past comprises religion, philosophy, science, social sciences and art. Both forms of culture have passed through a long process of evolution.

The evolution took place during man’s struggle with nature for existence, for the improvement of his conditions of life, for the enlargement of his power. Classes have also grown during the same process and class structure of society has inevitably shaped its culture. As a result culture has served the exploiters in the past. That is, historical culture has possessed a class character.

That does not mean the exploited have to renounce cultural heritage. Technology is an important ingredient of material culture. Though it is employed to serve the exploiters in a class society, yet it is indispensable for progress: “The proletariat has taken over the factories equipped by the bourgeoisies in that state in which the revolution found them. The old equipment is still serving us to this day. This fact most graphically and directly shows us that we cannot renounce the “heritage” After all, the revolution was undertaken To get possession of that heritage.” [Trotsky 1973: 230] What the proletariat does and must smash is the state machinery of the exploiters. Technology has taken over and developed further for the cause of socialism.

As in case of material culture the revolutionaries take the most advanced elements of spiritual culture. Religion which reflects man’s weakness in the face of nature and his helplessness within society is rejected but materialism and dialectics, two invaluable elements of the philosophy of old society are indispensable. Natural Sciences are generally closer to facts, but when they approach questions of philosophy, they are influenced by class aspirations. Social sciences are far more subjected to class interests of the exploiters, but it is possible to arrive at truth with the help of Marxism.

Psychology interested Trotsky and he found Freud well “within the frontiers of materialism.” So he wrote: “Pavlov’s method is experiment; Freud’s is conjecture, sometimes fantastic conjecture. The attempt to declare psychoanalysis, “incompatible” with Marxism is simple, or

more accurately too simplistic.” [Trotsky 1973: 234] Marxists may not subscribe to the views of Freud, but there can be no question of a ban on psychoanalysis.

There are people who label the art of the past as feudal or bourgeois and deem it enough to discard. Trotsky’s stand here is quite unequivocal. “..... art is a form of cognition of the world, not as a system of laws but as inspiring certain feelings and moods. The art of past centuries has made man more complex and flexible, has raised his mentality to a higher level, has enriched him in an all – round way. This achievement is a precious achievement of culture. Mastery of art of the past is, therefore, a necessary precondition not only for the creation of new art, but also for the building of the new society, for Marxism needs people with highly developed minds.” [Trotsky 1973: 234-235]

Trotsky breathed his last three decades before we heard a lot about Cultural Revolution. In China it was originally a political struggle – the attempt to seize power and establish its supremacy by one group by replacing the other, though artists, philosophers and writers too became the targets of attack. The Bolshevik view of Cultural Revolution as expounded by Trotsky was quite different.

The road to Cultural Revolution is long and hard. Its destination is prosperity, plenty and leisure for the masses. It seeks to eliminate the fundamental contradictions between town and country, between worker and peasant by machining cultivation, by providing advantages of the town to the country (paved roads, electric light, piped water supply, drains) and by absorbing the advantages of the country into town (spaciousness, greenery). That is possible only with the development of technology and industrialization: “The cultural revolution must not be understood in a superficially idealistic way or something which is an affair for small study groups. It is a question of changing the conditions of life, the methods of work and the everyday habits of a great nation, of a whole family of nations.” [Trotsky 1973: 246]

Cultural Revolution means development of higher morals too. Lying and deceit, for example, are “a part of culture which socialism will not take over. Relations in socialist society will be thoroughly transparent and will not require such auxiliary methods as deceits, lies, falsification, treachery, and perfidy.” [Trotsky 1973: 247] So the road to Cultural Revolution lies along the interaction of improved technology and morals.

Finally, we come to the question of proletarian culture. A lot of confusion prevails in this respect. Many people think that as every ruling class has its own culture, so the proletariat too has to create its own culture. That idea is not new but dates back to 1909, when Bogdanov contended that the proletariat should establish its own culture in contradiction to that of the past.

On the eve of Russian revolution, proletcult, the organization of Representatives of Proletarian Culture was set up independently of the Bolshevik party. It was not a literary movement at first and contributed a lot to the dissemination of culture among the workers. But in early 1920 a group of writers called the Forge or Smithy emerged and issued a manifesto called the “Red Flag of the Platform – Declaration of Proletariat Art”. They founded the All Russian Association of Proletarian Writers.

As Proletcult dominated Bogdanov wanted to make it the supreme voice of culture, Lenin challenged the anti –Marxist views and the Central Committee adopted a special resolution in

1920 to subordinate the activities of the Proletcult to the people's commissariat for education. However, All – Russian Association of Proletariat Writers became a tool of bureaucracy after Lenin's death and at its first All – Russian Conference in 1925, it pressed its claims to become the organ of party dictatorship in literature. The same conference created a new Russian Association of proletarian writers. The old name was, however, restored after 1928 [Lenin, *Collected Works*, 31, 1977: 287-290, 316-324]

Trotsky dealt with the idea of proletarian culture in *Literature and Revolution* (chapter VI) at length in 1924. Unlike the bourgeoisie, the proletariat is a deprived class and does not enjoy the opportunity to develop its culture even before seizing power. At first, its energy “will be spent mainly in conquering power, in retaining and strengthening it and in applying it to the most urgent needs of existence and of further struggle.” Then, when, “the conditions for cultural creation will become more favorable, the proletariat will be more and more dissolved into a socialist community and will free itself from class characteristics and thus cease to be a proletariat.” In this way, “there is no proletarian culture” and never will be and in fact there is no reason to regret for this.” [Trotsky 1925: 185-186]

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