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Terrorism And Communism (Revolutions Series): Slavoj Žižek Presents Trotsky



Synopsis

Soon after the Bolshevik victory in the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky led the Red Army against the counter-revolutionary White armies. Written in the white heat of the Civil War, "Terrorism and Communism" is one of the most potent defences of revolutionary dictatorship of the twentieth century. In his provocative commentary in this new edition, the coruscating critic Slavoj Zizek argues that Trotsky's attack on the illusions of democracy has a vital relevance to today.

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Customer Reviews

In the summer of 1918, after the Russian Revolution of October 1917, Karl Kautsky wrote a pamphlet against the Bolshevik's establishment of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the newly formed Soviet Russian Nation. Kautsky's pamphlet was called "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" which criticized the example of the Bolsheviks and objected to any dictatorship as being inconsistent with socialism. There had already been a conflict between the Bolsheviks and the Social Democrats of the "Second Socialist International" over the idea of a revolutionary overturning of governments to be replaced by socialist governments. In that debate Karl Kautsky had sided with the Bolsheviks against the reformist Eduard Bernstein "gradual socialists" who believed that socialism would come about through elections. Indeed, Karl Kautsky left the Second International over this issue. Therefore, in the summer of 1918, the pamphlet in which Kautsky attacked the Russian Revolution was a shock to the Bolsheviks and set off a great debate between Kautsky and the Bolsheviks. In October 1918, one year after the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin, himself answered

Kautsky by writing and publishing the "Russian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky." The following June in 1919, Karl Kautsky wrote another book, called "Terrorism and Communism: a Contribution to the Natural History of Revolution" which was also critical of the Bolshevik use of power and terror against opposition groups within Russia during the Civil War which was just starting in 1919. In reply to Kautsky, Leon Trotsky wrote this particular book under the same name--"Terrorism and Communism." It is this book that is the subject of this particular review. "Terrorism and Communism by Leon Trotsky was written and published in 1920 just as the civil war against the capitalistic ("white") forces and the interventionist armies of certain western nations, was coming to a conclusion. With the successful conclusion of civil war, the new Bolshevik government was free to deal with the invasion of Russia by the Polish forces under Polish General Josef Pilsudski. Which the new Soviet government did in July and August of 1920 during the "Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920. This was the background written in answer to Kautsky's 1919 book and was another page of the great debate between the Bolsheviks and Kautsky. Over the years since 1973, I have been collecting books on this great debate. This book is the most recent edition to that collection.

US imperialism uses mass terror on a world scale to defend its interests: nuclear weapons, the even more horrendous fire bombing, as was done in Dresden and Tokyo, napalm, white phosphorous and so on. All of these are weapons that mostly target the working class. In two world wars, and in Korea and Vietnam, US imperialism has slaughtered many millions, mostly civilians. This has all been done in the name of "democracy," yet US imperialism has invaded dozens and dozens of countries, and overthrown democratically elected governments as in Guatemala in 1954, and Chile in 1973. All of this is an anathema to Marxists, who believe that that their aims can only be won by convincing the working class. The Marxist view is that the state is a dictatorship of one class over another, regardless of how many political parties there are. The terror of the imperialists is used to support the dictatorship of the capitalists. Trotsky in this volume is merely defending, in the context of the Russian Civil War, the use of terror (on a much smaller scale) to defend the dictatorship of the proletariat, a much larger group than the capitalists. The White Army of Czarists, capitalists and Black Hundreds was already using mass terror; Trotsky thought it reasonable that the workers be able to use some of the same means to defend themselves. Today "terrorism" is not used in the US in a scientific way; it is a pejorative used against people they don't like (I don't like the reactionary groups that use Islam and terror to advance their agendas, but that doesn't mean supporting the reactionary US wars). Cuba is on the US list of "state

sponsors of terrorism," which is a complete lie, while the US allows terrorists based in the US and trained by the CIA to attack Cuba. When Cuba sent people here to keep tabs on these terrorists, they were thrown in prison (see [The Cuban Five: Who they are; why they were framed; why they should be free](#) and [Voices from Prison](#)). Other books that are of interest in this debate are [The proletarian revolution and Kautsky the renegade](#), also available in [The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power: Documents, 1918-1919](#); [Preparing the Founding Congress, Social Democracy and Wars of Intervention in Russia, 1918-21](#), and [Their Morals and Ours](#). As to why Marxists oppose individual acts of terror, see [Marxism and Terrorism](#).

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