

and decentralized because our human nature creates for us a “potential for freedom and self-organization” and a need to “provide models for autonomous social relationships and self-organization” (p. 139).

ERIC BOEHME

Denison University
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Emanuele Saccarelli, *Gramsci and Trotsky in the Shadow of Stalinism: The Political Theory and Practice of Opposition*, New York: Routledge, 2007, 308 pp.

In *Gramsci and Trotsky in the Shadow of Stalinism*, Emanuele Saccarelli contributes to the revitalization of Marxian political thought by assessing the strength of Antonio Gramsci's and Leon Trotsky's respective oppositions to Stalinism. Given the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, there has been a paradoxical resurgence in academic and popular interest in Marx's writings. *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *US News & World Report*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri have all called attention to the importance of Marx's thought.⁶ This interest in Marx has occurred alongside the development of unfettered capitalism, the terminal decay of liberalism, the ascendance of rightwing ideology, the resurgence of Anglo-American imperialism, and the apparent lack of viable alternatives to capitalism. Thus, Saccarelli argues that Marx's legacy appears to be more of an open question now than ever before, but that the prospect of revitalizing Marxism will remain generic and ineffective as long as the question of Stalinism remains ignored. To recover the lost thread of Marxism, according to Saccarelli, it is necessary to begin where the thread had been lost: in the 1920s and 1930s when the Stalinist degeneration emerged. Saccarelli assesses the works of Gramsci and Trotsky for their opposition to Stalinism and as important resources for the revitalization of Marxism. In his assessment, Saccarelli finds Gramsci's work “useful” and Trotsky's “indispensable” in this project (p. 13). Saccarelli's thesis is that “Trotsky provides the more specific historical and political coordinates necessary for a revitalization of Marxism” (p. 19).

The first part of the book addresses Gramsci's political activity and legacy. In chapter two, Saccarelli questions the ways in which Gramsci is understood today due to the way the first Italian editions of his prison letters and notebooks, published between 1947 and 1951, were distorted so as to conform with the Italian Communist Party's (PCI) political position at the time. Because of their fragmentary character, the PCI thematically organized Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* in an accessible form for a mass audience but also removed Gramsci's references to members of the

⁶ John Cassidy, “The Return of Karl Marx,” *The New Yorker* (October 20 and 27, 1997), pp. 248–259; David Wessel, “As Rich-Poor Gap Widens in the US, Class Mobility Stalls,” *The Wall Street Journal* (May 13, 2005), p. A1; *US News & World Report*, Special Edition, “Secrets of Genius: Three Minds That Shaped the Twentieth Century” (August/September 2003; the issue focuses on the “Masterminds Freud, Marx and Einstein”); Paul Lewis, “Marx's Stock Resurges on a 150-Year Tip,” *The New York Times* (June 27, 1998); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

international communist movement, such as Trotsky, Amadeo Bordiga, and Rosa Luxemburg, who were an anathema to Stalinism. According to Saccarelli, an assessment of Gramsci's contribution to Marxism is impossible without addressing the PCI's political degeneration. However, Saccarelli does not point out that many of these debates were transcended by the publication of Valentino Gerratana's complete and critical Italian edition of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1975), which provided a philologically accurate reproduction of Gramsci's notes.

In chapter three, Saccarelli assesses Gramsci's legacy in relation to his political activity prior to his arrest in 1926 and in his critique of Stalinism in the *Prison Notebooks*. In his assessment of Gramsci's political activity between 1923 and 1926, when Stalinism began to emerge, Saccarelli argues that Gramsci antagonized Stalinists and provided an "intrepid challenge" to it but did not provide a political alternative to it (pp. 67, 70). The more contentious point in chapter three is Saccarelli's adherence to Francesco Benvenuti and Silvio Pons' argument that Gramsci's criticisms of Trotsky in the *Prison Notebooks* are actually a concealed commentary on Stalin. To elude Fascist authorities, Gramsci camouflaged the names of individuals associated with the Soviet Union, such as Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, and, in one instance, Stalin. In his petitions to receive and read books, Gramsci openly used Trotsky's name, but in his notes he referred to Trotsky as "Leone Davidovi" and "Leone Bronstein."⁷ In the notes where Gramsci critically questions Trotsky's ideas,⁸ Saccarelli argues that Trotsky actually functions as a "lightning rod" for Gramsci to "defuse the danger of his fierce critique of the Stalinist third period." (pp. 71, 83) If this were the case, it is not clear why Gramsci would continue to camouflage Trotsky's name as "Davidovich" or "Bronstein" instead of using his name openly, and it is not clear why he would not use a camouflaged reference to Stalin ("Giuseppe Bessarione") as he did in Notebook 14, §68.⁹ It seems more likely, to follow Frank Rosengarten's analysis, that there are points of convergence between Gramsci and Trotsky but there are also points of divergence in their respective views on how "the national and international dimensions of the socialist revolution are to be interrelated with each other."¹⁰

The second part of the book examines and assesses the significance of Leon Trotsky's political theory and practice against the background of Stalinism. In chapter four, Saccarelli addresses the issue of why Trotsky is not typically associated with political theory. He claims that the field of political theory has accommodated Marx and Gramsci but in a nonpolitical way. "Like dinosaur bones assembled in a museum in a somewhat menacing pose, [Marx and Gramsci] remain, in the end, as inert as they are compelling. Trotsky, on the other hand, has proven immune to this treatment." (p. 97) As Saccarelli continues, conceding some of the points absent in Trotsky's appeal as a political theorist:

Unlike Marx and Gramsci, whose political deeds are more easily subsumed to their great and not-so-great texts, Trotsky made a revolution. He did not just search,

⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. Valentino Gerratana, 4 vols. (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1975), e.g., Q3, §31, p. 306; Q11, §70, p. 1507.

⁸ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q4, §52, p. 489; Q6, §138, pp. 801–802; Q7, §16, pp. 865–867.

⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, pp. 1728–1729, cf. note 1, p. 2937.

¹⁰ Frank Rosengarten, "The Gramsci-Trotsky Question, 1922–1932," *Social Text*, no. 11 (1984–85), pp. 65–95.

think, and struggle. He won, at least for a precious while. Little in Trotsky's textual legacy runs the risk of being confused with the sort of work that satisfies the professional protocols of the academic disciplines. Unlike Marx and Gramsci, there is little in Trotsky resembling a philosophy of history, a political economy, a social theory, or even a statement of method. Most of his texts address instead a specific conjuncture, surveying a political landscape, laying out the prospects and strategic lines for action. For this reason, the specific subject of his analysis could today be safely dismissed as historical, or even journalistic ... (p. 97)

Ultimately, the problem with reading Trotsky's work as political theory, according to Saccarelli, is that "Trotsky's relentless attention to *all* the pressing political developments of his time, and his unabashed search for a line of action leading to and through them ... are conspicuous and unsettling" (p. 97). In surveying the existing literature on Trotsky, Saccarelli argues that Trotsky's legacy has been dismissed, truncated, and misrepresented, which in turn reinforces the lack of attention to Trotsky's contributions.

In chapter five, Saccarelli examines Trotsky's analysis and political opposition to Stalinism. Saccarelli argues that Trotsky's analysis and critique of Stalinism as Thermidorian and Bonapartist described the degeneration of the Russian Revolution through the process of eliminating the radical leadership, bureaucratization, and the consolidation of power. Despite the fact that Trotsky was unable to successfully overcome the systematic entrenchment of Stalinism, Saccarelli describes Trotsky's legacy as a political balancing act of a sustained critique and opposition to Stalinism, on the one hand, and the continual development of Marxist theory and practice, on the other, in which he attempted to preserve the legacy of Marxism and the Russian Revolution.

Following Saccarelli's argument, returning to Marx's texts to see how they may assist in analyses of the current conjuncture is insufficient to revitalizing Marxism (p. 11). Rather, Saccarelli argues that the revitalization of Marxism requires a return to Trotsky's texts to understand the inadequacies of Stalinism and the alternatives to it. On the face of it, it is unclear how revisiting the intraparty struggles between Trotsky and Stalin in the 1920s and 1930s is sufficient to the revitalization of Marxism in the current moment. And it is unclear what is gained by attempting the impossible task of resolving disputes of the past. Even if we assume that both Gramsci and Trotsky were correct in their analyses and critiques of Stalinism, it is unclear how such a resolution would address the problems of the current situation and illuminate new lines of action. If Marxism is understood as a philosophy of praxis, the point is not to resolve disputes of the past but to place the disputes in their historical context and try to discover their strengths and shortcomings in the process of forming alternative theories and practices. Ultimately, the point of this process is to develop a philosophy and practice that have the capacity to transcend and overcome the limitations of our contemporary contexts.

MARCUS E. GREEN

University of Redlands

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