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China/US

Leftist studies in China and the United States

- Features -



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Leon Trotsky's works have long been repressed in China, but translator Shi Yongqin has dedicated his life to bringing them to a Chinese audience. [1] Born in 1949, the year of the Chinese Revolution, Shi's experiences reflect the latent dissatisfaction of Chinese intellectuals with mainstream ideology. At the recent launch of his book, *A Distorted Revolution*, Shi was joined in Hong Kong by U.S. activist and scholar Paul LeBlanc. Below is an edited transcript of their discussion.

Host: To start, we would like to invite Mr Shi to share his experiences with us.

Shi Yongqin: My journey toward understanding Trotsky was not a conscious one. In our era, there were starkly contrasting attitudes towards major historical figures such as [Josef] Stalin and Trotsky: while Stalin was praised, Trotsky was completely denounced. At that time, research in this area in China was neither permitted nor feasible due to various constraints.

Later, during my time as a sent-down youth¹, I sought to enrich myself through learning alongside my farming work. When I began studying Russian, I had no specific goal in mind; I simply hoped that one day I might read Russian literature, such as novels, in Russian. Russia has produced many great writers and immortal literary works, and it was this simple aspiration that motivated me to teach myself Russian.

As my proficiency in Russian improved, I developed an interest in becoming a translator and I wanted to translate some great works. However, all the great works by renowned Russian novelists had already been translated by others, and as a beginner, I felt unqualified to retranslate these classics.

Eventually, I came across Trotsky's autobiography. Although I had not had the opportunity to study this subject in depth before, my exposure to films such as *Lenin in 1918* and my experiences under the Stalinist system—along with certain phenomena in Chinese society—made me feel that these were incompatible with true socialist ideals. Reading Trotsky's autobiography answered many of my questions about Soviet Party history and clarified my doubts regarding certain actions carried out under the banner of socialism.



"This is not merely about 'rehabilitating' Trotsky, as some might narrowly interpret it. Rather, I aim to present a genuine proletarian revolutionary and demonstrate what true socialist revolution should look like"—Shi Yongqin. Trotsky at his desk in 1918. Image by unknown photographer.

From that moment on, I decided to dedicate my life to translating Trotsky's works. Trotsky's autobiography became my first translation and the first publicly published work by Trotsky in China.² Although some of his works had been published previously, they were limited to internal circulation. The translator's preface I wrote for this book became the first positive evaluation of Trotsky published in mainland China.

Trotsky's autobiography only covers his life up until his exile to Turkey in 1929, since it was published in 1930. Recognising the need for a complete biography, I later connected with Zheng Chaolin³ and others in Shanghai to begin translating Isaac Deutscher's trilogy [on Trotsky—The Prophet Armed, The Prophet Unarmed, and The Prophet Outcast]. I organised the translation of the third volume and proofread the first edition six times due to quality concerns.

After this book was published, I read it thoroughly six times, and each reading moved me deeply. I was particularly impressed by Trotsky's analysis of the German Communist Party's misguided policies during the anti-fascist struggle, as well as his sharp and profound criticism of the Third Period theory and social fascism theory. Each reading left me inspired and filled with admiration.

Through my experience translating The Prophet trilogy, I determined my translation priorities. Since Trotsky was primarily a revolutionary, I focused on his revolutionary practices and guidance. Although I was not capable of translating his works on the Spanish Revolution at the moment, I first translated his collection on the October Revolution. Subsequently, I translated Trotsky on the Chinese Revolution and Trotsky on Anti-Fascist Struggles.

It is worth noting that The Prophet trilogy has received widespread acclaim in mainland China, with its third edition published [in 2023]. The three books I mentioned earlier—Trotsky on the October Revolution, Trotsky on the Chinese Revolution, and Trotsky on Anti-Fascist Struggles—were all published by Shaanxi People's Publishing House. The latter two books have received particularly high ratings on Douban [A Chinese version of Goodreads], with Trotsky on the Chinese Revolution scoring 8.9 out of 10 and Trotsky on Anti-Fascist Struggles achieving an impressive 9.7 out of 10.

I believe that the internal party struggles within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) during the 1920s marked a turning point in the history of the international Communist movement. These struggles led to the formation of the Stalinist system and laid the groundwork for bureaucratism in socialist states. In fact, expelling Trotsky out of the Soviet Union symbolically represented expelling Marxism itself. Additionally, I have translated the three-volume English edition of The Left Opposition, Trotsky on Culture in the Transition Period, and Trotsky on Socialist Economic Construction. Currently, I am working on translating a fourteen-volume collection of Trotsky's writings from his final period of exile.

My ability to dedicate my life to translating Trotsky's works is associated with the socialist education we experience during the red era. This led us to believe that a communist society was the inevitable direction of human development and the most ideal form of human society. Although I also write articles, these are merely byproducts of my translation work—translation has always been my primary focus.

Host: Thank you, Mr Shi, for sharing your experiences. Now we would like to invite Paul Le Blanc to share his experiences and insights.

Paul Le Blanc: I am honored to be part of this discussion, and I want to salute the activists who have organised this event, which I think is potentially the beginning of important interchanges and sharing across the borders of our countries and other countries as well.

As for my journey: I was born in 1947. My parents were left-wing labor activists who had been members of the Communist Party of the United States in the '30s and '40s. I grew up in the U.S. at a time of relative affluence of our capitalist system. The political atmosphere was permeated by Cold War anti-communism. That was certainly the case in the small Pennsylvania town where I grew up.

At that time, I was inspired by the ideals of what was supposed to be a democratic republic with liberty and justice for all in the U.S., but I discovered that it was far less free, far less just and far less democratic than we had been led to believe. The initial influences on me as I tried to understand the realities around me included social struggles and social movements, such as the labor movement that my parents had devoted their lives to, and in particular, trade unions. Also quite important in my developing consciousness were the growing anti-racist struggles and the civil rights movement in the U.S.

Then there were the anti-war stirrings and growing movements on that issue. There was the danger of nuclear war and protests against that. There was U.S. government support for right-wing dictators, and U.S. military interventions in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Most significantly, there was the Vietnam War, which I saw growing and developing even as a teenager. I became active in the anti-war movement.

Later, I became aware of dissident poets and writers and intellectuals in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. I was influenced by the Chinese Revolution and felt the impact of Maoism. I was influenced and inspired by the Cuban Revolution.

More specific intellectual influences on me. There was a book by Victor Serge, who had been a Russian revolutionary and part of the Left Opposition led by Trotsky. He wrote a book that came out in 1937 called *Russia Twenty Years After*. My mother had bought that book as a teenager, but then, because of Stalinist influences, set it aside at her mother's house. I discovered it at my grandmother's house, and that became an important book for me.

I was influenced by C Wright Mills, a radical sociologist who wrote about the U.S. power elite and other things. He wrote a book called *The Marxists*, which introduced me to various Marxists and Marxist writings and ideas. Through that, I became aware of Deutscher, and I began to read Deutscher's biography of Stalin, and then his biography of Trotsky and various other writings.

My parents brought various left-wing publications into the house. There was a subscription to a magazine called *Monthly Review*, edited by Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman and then Harry Magdoff. That was an independent Marxist magazine influenced by Maoism to some extent, but it was an important influence for me. Another periodical that came into my house was called *The Progressive*, a left-liberal magazine. Another was *The National Guardian*, which was a left-wing weekly that influenced me. And then, on my own, I subscribed to a magazine called *New Politics*, which was a left-wing socialist magazine. These were some of the influences on me as I was going through my later teenage years.

Later, I was influenced by Ernest Mandel, who was a great Marxist economist and writer from Belgium, and a Trotskyist. And then George Breitman, who edited writings by Malcolm X and Trotsky. I came to know both Mandel and Breitman personally, and they became mentors of mine. I was also influenced by various other Marxist writings.

I considered joining the youth groups of the Socialist Party and of the Communist Party, but I did not. Instead, I became part of the New Left and joined an organisation called Students for a Democratic Society, which was much more open and vague in its ideology. At a certain point I concluded it was inadequate.

I then found my way to an organization called the Socialist Workers Party, which was affiliated with the Fourth

International, a network of Trotskyist parties around the world. These provided a certain coherent thinking and disciplined activism, and a Trotskyist understanding of Marxism that was internationalist, that was committed to revolutionary democracy, revolutionary socialism, and that was critical minded. So these were the influences on me as I made my journey to Trotskyism.

H: Thank you for your sharing, Paul. Would you like to add anything, Mr Shi?

SY: I see significant differences between Professor Le Blanc and myself. He had the opportunity to be influenced by various events in his social environment, including social, historical, and organizational influences. I, however, only began engaging with Trotsky's works and translation when I was nearly 40 (37 or 38). Professor Le Blanc has a much broader perspective, having personally participated in social movements, while I am merely a late-starting translator. I believe my most valuable contribution has been translating Trotsky's works. Although some have encouraged me to write, I feel I cannot write as well as Trotsky did.

PLB: I am immensely impressed by what Mr Shi presented in his discussion of his journey, and I am very impressed with the accomplishments that he has been part of. It is extremely important what he has been able to do. Our journeys are different and have involved different aspects, different qualities, which is to be expected given that we grew up in very different cultures and very different contexts.

When I was in Wuhan for a conference on Rosa Luxemburg and then another international conference on Lenin, I was able to connect with a number of scholars, especially younger scholars, and people who were searching and asking critical questions. This struck me as extremely exciting and important. The resources that Mr. Shi is making available to this rising layer of people in China are incredibly important. So I am very pleased to know him, and I admire and respect the work that he is doing very much.

H: There is an interesting point that we discovered as young students in Hong Kong. In our education, we have engaged deeply with various works, from both West and East, that shape our understanding of society and history. Chinese history is a fundamental part of our curriculum. Additionally, the method from the West also influenced us a lot, for example, *The Power Elite* by C. Wright Mills is regarded as a classic in our sociology program, offering critical insights into the structures of power within society.

Despite this structured learning, many of us often feel dissatisfied with the educational content. This discontent has led some students to explore leftist ideas and its interpretations of Chinese history. The works of scholars like Mr. Shi have been instrumental in helping us grasp the complexities of the current socio-political landscape in Hong Kong and mainland China. We therefore could view Hong Kong as a product of China's unfinished revolution, which adds a significant historical dimension to our studies. This perspective enables us to draw interesting comparisons between China and the U.S., highlighting the various influences that shape both societies, from a methodological comparison perspective.

SY: Trotsky's method of argumentation is extremely rigorous. Through translating his works, I have adopted this rigorous approach to argumentation, which has significantly influenced my own writing style. As a result, my articles exhibit a similar logical framework.

In the field of party history research in China, scholars seem to accept only views up to [Nikolai] Bukharin, while completely dismissing Trotsky's perspectives. At first, I believed that my translations could not be published due to censorship from the General Administration of Press and Publication. However, I later discovered that the reviewers at the Compilation and Translation Bureau⁴ were Bukharinists who fundamentally rejected Trotsky's ideas. More regrettably, they neither explained their reasons for rejection nor were willing to engage in public debate.

H: Here we could find that for Chinese scholars, argument is not an end in itself; rather, it serves as a practical methodology to determine the direction China should take. It is not merely a debate; it is almost a governance and revolutionary pathway approach. When certain historical events are discussed, they often transcend mere history in China and take on a methodological significance. The question becomes: Which school of thought (which means what to do) do we actually align with? This perspective can make it difficult for writers like Mr. Shi to publish their work in China.

SY: Therefore, a thoroughly developed theory can be highly convincing. When an article is well-supported by historical evidence, demonstrates rigorous logical reasoning, and reveals the truth, it becomes irrefutably persuasive.

Reflecting on the reasons for Trotsky's defeat in the party struggle highlights a stark contrast: While Trotsky engaged in ideological and theoretical debates, Stalin relied on party discipline and state machinery to suppress opposition. In such circumstances—where one side wields significant political power and state resources, while the other depends solely on theoretical discourse—the outcome is almost predetermined.

These are my thoughts on this matter. Now, I would pass to professor Le Blanc to share his perspectives.

PLB: I will add some thoughts to this. First of all, I very much agree with Mr. Shi and others on Trotsky's brilliance and his qualities as a Marxist and as a revolutionary, which have been distorted; but we must be able to understand and incorporate them into our own understanding and thinking in order to be adequate activists and scholars of Russian history and world history. One of the things that impressed me greatly about Mr. Shi's work translated into English was a long interview giving a panoramic view of Trotsky's life and thought; I am hoping that this can be circulated widely because it is incredibly valuable.

At the same time, I would argue—and I assume we have agreement, but in any event I think it is worth emphasizing—that Trotsky was not simply a godlike genius; he was part of a revolutionary collective. He could not have been effective if he was not part of a very broad revolutionary collective in the Communist movements leading up to the 1917 revolution and then in the 1920s.

In Trotsky's mature thinking, Lenin was central; he had committed himself to this collective so there are Trotsky's ideas but also Lenin's ideas—and not simply Lenin's ideas but also those of other comrades that must be looked at—in some cases critiqued and rejected. Trotsky was part of a revolutionary collective; that is one aspect of his strength that we must seek to replicate—to develop more of a revolutionary collective that is not dependent on one person's ideas but is part of an ongoing collective revolutionary process of thinking and carrying out activities.

In this context, Trotsky has been expelled from the CPSU—from the Soviet Union itself—from life. From the consideration of Marxist activists and other activists it is essential to bring him back in, to help people find their way—as some of us have—to the brilliance and qualities that Trotsky represents regarding revolution—the struggle for socialism—and what socialism really is. He represents this but he was not alone; there were others we must also look at in the revolutionary collective. We must commit ourselves not simply to Mao or Stalin or Trotsky but to something better than that.

I hope my meaning is clear; that is what I wanted to offer in this important discussion.

H: Professor Shi, would you like to share your opinion on professor Le Blanc's comments?

SY: Revolution is a collective endeavor involving all of humanity. Marx identified the proletariat as the primary force

for social transformation because it represents the interests of the majority and the liberation of all people. While many assert that China's proletariat is weak dating back to the 1920s, the reality is that the working class occupies a disadvantaged position in both developed and developing countries. The capital power lies with the bourgeois ruling class, which controls cultural and state apparatus.

In a proletarian revolution, the role of revolutionary leadership is particularly crucial. For instance, the CPSU, initially founded by Lenin as a proletarian party, gradually became an instrument of Stalin's dictatorship after Lenin's death and Trotsky's defeat. Marxists have long debated the role of individuals in historical processes. While individuals can indeed exert decisive influence at times, for a revolution to succeed, we must return to Marx's assertion: Theory becomes convincing when it is comprehensive, and when theory convinces people, it transforms into a powerful material force.

PLB: Yes, I think we are in basic agreement. I basically agree with what Mr. Shi has just expressed.

H: I would like to add a few points here. In China, serving as a double-edged legacy, Maoist ideology is profoundly influential, which compels some individuals to voice alternative perspectives in capitalist China. In a sense, these alternative voices are necessary given Mao's enduring impact. When we critique Maoism, Trotsky often emerges as a figure who is positioned in competition with both Mao and Lenin. This creates a complex and contradictory situation, which potentially led to an icon cult of personality.

SY: I am clear about my objective: to restore Trotsky's true history through translation and writing. This is not merely about "rehabilitating" Trotsky, as some might narrowly interpret it. Rather, I aim to present a genuine proletarian revolutionary and demonstrate what true socialist revolution should look like.

H: I believe Mr. Shi has highlighted the importance of examining Trotsky's role. One key aspect is understanding how his figure is perceived within the U.S. context? As Mr. Shi has pointed out, it is crucial to identify a significant figure that illustrates the original phase of the working-class movement and Marx's critique. Could you elaborate on this? Specifically, during your experiences in the Cold War or under capitalist ideology, what significance did discovering figures such as Lenin or Trotsky hold for you then, and how does that relevance continue today?

PLB: For understanding reality, including my own reality, in a way that seeks to change that reality for the better, that seeks to bring about rule by the people as opposed to rule by the rich over society. So, for many activists—not all—but many activists, Lenin and Trotsky have become symbols that can be valuable; their ideas are invaluable and essential for many of us as we seek to understand and change reality.

We must challenge distorted notions of what socialism is in the minds of many people. What Stalin did and represented was a dictatorship—a terrible dictatorship. Many people in the U.S. think that is what socialism is. Also, the struggle is not to say, "no, here are the words of Trotsky," but rather to point to the oppressive realities of U.S. capitalism that must be overcome. This is what revolutionaries in Russia were trying to accomplish, and they failed. Many of them conducted a struggle against this dictatorship of Stalin that was not socialism at all, and they showed how it was not socialism at all.

We have to rely on our own power—the collective power of the people and especially of the working class. There are struggles in the U.S. that have shown this: of the labour and civil rights movement, anti-racist struggles, women's struggles, and so forth. That is the dynamic that I see.

It may be different in China in some ways since China made a revolution in the name of socialism and communism; large numbers of people were won to that and are committed to it in some form or another. Whereas in the U.S., that

is very much not the case. So, it makes more sense to talk about not certain personalities but rather realities on the ground that people are facing and try to explain why those realities are so bad and what can be done to overcome that oppression. In doing that, some of us who are activists make use of Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and so forth, to advance the struggle. That is the dynamic that I have been part of.

Some activists reject Marx or Lenin or Trotsky; others turn them into gods—talking about “Lenin said this” or “Trotsky said that”—and most people do not understand what they are talking about. Both tendencies should be avoided; Trotsky and Lenin would have completely agreed with that. Their method was not to find out who is the human god and follow that person but rather to organise. Organise more and more of the working class—the oppressed—and others to struggle against oppression, but use Marxism as a tool in that struggle.

I am not sure if this completely answers your question, but your question has elicited this response from me. I hope it is helpful.

H: It is quite interesting because I think what Mr. Shi is trying to convey is that he believes socialism is the path for China’s development pathway, therefore the question is: If this is not the true pathway to socialism, then what is the alternative way to socialism? From the U.S. perspective, however, the situation is somewhat different; it’s more about questioning capitalism, stating that it is not working.

This raises a different question: If capitalism is not working, how can we abolish it? This is a concern for the United States. In contrast, the situation in China is entirely different. I find this particularly intriguing because both scenarios are interconnected, as they both address what is genuinely necessary for a socialist revolution.

SY: The difference between professor Le Blanc and me lies not so much in our analytical perspectives but rather in the different stages of our work. I am primarily focused on enlightenment efforts, while professor Le Blanc employs Marxist, Leninist, and Trotskyist methods as an activist aiming for social transformation.

Although theory and practice are interconnected, my current priority is to introduce representative content to the Chinese audience, whereas professor Le Blanc emphasises practical activism. In the U.S., there is a wealth of translations available, not only of Trotsky’s works but also those by Luxemburg and others; unfortunately, such resources are lacking in China.

As for me, I am now 75 years old—two years younger than Professor Le Blanc—so I can only engage in activities that are within my capabilities.

H: I find it fascinating to see the different ways in which you engage with Marxism. For instance, Mr. Shi was introduced to Marxism through Soviet Russia, where literature played a significant role in shaping his understanding. In contrast, professor Le Blanc approaches Marxism from a different perspective, focusing on addressing the analytical crisis within capitalism.

This brings us to another important question: Given the diverse contexts of Chinese and U.S. perspectives, what defines a Marxist? What does it mean to identify as a Marxist? What characteristics should a Marxist possess? I believe this is a valuable topic for exploration, as Marxism can encompass a wide range of interpretations.

PLB: I am interested in exploring this question of what should the standards be for a Marxist. But I want to say one additional thing about this last phase of our discussion.

When I was the age of the activists I see in Hong Kong, I was immersing myself in the writings of Deutscher and Trotsky that Mr. Shi has been translating for Chinese activists. I was immersing myself in these things. They were incredibly important to me, the various volumes that Trotsky wrote, including the fourteen volumes of his later writings that Mr. Shi is in the process of translating and the Deutscher trilogy — these were part of the process that formed me. And so I think it's incredibly important that Mr. Shi is making these resources available to many thousands of activists in China and elsewhere.

So we are at different stages in some ways. One of the things that also is highlighted in my mind, as I am listening to and participating in this discussion, is the incredibly practical importance of internationalism. It is not just a slogan and a nice idea, but it is vital for us if we want to develop as revolutionaries and help advance the revolutionary struggle in our different contexts, in our different cultures.

I made some notes for myself [regarding your question], and since I am still talking I can present these as part of opening this phase of the discussion. These are the six notes I took down on the standards of a Marxist.

One, for me, and I think for Marx, is commitment to struggle against oppression in all of its forms, for a better society, with freedom for all, and for the most thoroughgoing democracy, rule by the people. So, commitment to the struggle for those things.

Two, critical-mindedness. Marx once emphasised that we must doubt everything. That does not mean reject everything, but doubt everything, be critical-minded and, at the same time, be open to new realities and understanding them, be open to the ideas of others, including others with whom we disagree and who may be wrong on one thing but may have an insight on something else.

A third aspect of Marxism must be to understand the centrality of the economy and economic development to the development of history and society. And to understand that for the past several thousand years, society has been divided into classes. We stand with the laboring classes, with the oppressed majority, and today with the working class. So, that is important. Also to understand the global nature of capitalism, which also means the global nature of its alternatives—socialism must be global in order to realize its various aspects.

A fourth essential for me and for many Marxists is dialectics: an understanding that everything is changing all the time, and reality is full of contradictions that are interacting with each other in all kinds of ways. We must understand this about ourselves, about our movement, our struggles, our society, our economy and so forth. We must try to understand things in their complexity, their dialectical nature and their evolution, seeing cause and effect and so forth.

Everything that I have been saying so far is part of number five, which is historical materialism, the materialist conception of history.

And all of this blended together leads to number six: a commitment to socialism. Socialism would involve the most thoroughgoing democracy: rule by the people with freedom and justice for all.

So, for me, these are the standards of a Marxist. There are other things that could be said, but these are the notes that I made as I was trying to think through what are the standards of a Marxist.

H: Thank you for sharing; then we can move on to Mr. Shi.

SY: Professor Le Blanc has thoroughly outlined the standards of a Marxist. I would like to add one important point: the most significant measure of a Marxist is their commitment to the liberation of all humanity. This requires a broad vision. As Marx stated: "The proletariat can only liberate itself by liberating all humanity." This statement encapsulates the spirit that Marxists should embody. In this context, Lenin and Trotsky serve as exemplary figures who effectively applied Marxist theory in practice.

Only truly strong individuals can exhibit tolerance and magnanimity—qualities we now refer to as the democratic spirit. This includes the ability to accommodate differing opinions, accept diverse types of people, and unite them into a collective strength. In contrast, Stalin demonstrated weakness. The weak often lack tolerance; like a dwarf who, despite great effort, defeats a giant but would never spare its life. This illustrates that certain qualities are intrinsically linked to personal character; Only genuinely strong individuals possess the confidence to embrace different voices.

Examining the history of the CPSU reveals a fundamental distinction between Lenin and Stalin's leadership styles. Lenin emphasised mobilising people's initiative, while Stalin focused on control. As [Vyacheslav] Molotov noted in over a hundred interviews, during Lenin's era everything was vigorously debated within the party; under Stalin, silence prevailed. This difference underscores that only truly strong leaders can foster party democracy and fully unleash individual initiative.

The Bolshevik Party under Lenin was highly democratic; it is entirely incorrect to assert that all of Stalin's practices originated from Lenin. Only under genuine leadership can individuals realise their potential, democracy be achieved, and personalities be fully expressed. However, under Stalin's dictatorship, none of this is possible.

PLB: I very much agree with Mr. Shi's points; these are important and invaluable.

H: I think it is important to provide some cultural context. When Mr. Shi refers to "Marxist," he is actually talking about someone who can accommodate different ideas. This concept extends beyond Marxism; it signifies a person with significant influence.

This discussion revolves around the expression of opinions within an organisation. Mr. Shi is highlighting that, in the Chinese context, there may be misunderstandings about what it means to be strong. Typically, "strong man" suggests authority, but this does not capture the full essence of the term. It is not merely about coercive authority; rather, Mr. Shi is referring to a form of strength that involves agency and active engagement.

SY: That is not what I meant. The strong person I am referring to must first possess foresight and the ability to accurately understand the directions of dialectical historical development. Only those who can see from such heights can have true confidence—confidence that comes from knowing they are aligned with historical trends. While Trotsky engaged in ideological and theoretical debates, Stalin relied on party discipline and state machinery to suppress opposition. In such circumstances ... the outcome is almost predetermined—Shi Yongqin.

Such individuals can perceive not only the overarching narrative but also every significant turning point in history with clarity. For example, Trotsky described in his autobiography how, during the 1905 revolution, many decisions were made spontaneously, yet they felt natural and inevitable.

This quality reflects the strength I am talking about, such as Trotsky, who never acted out of personal ambition but fought solely for historical progress and for the liberation of humanity as a whole. Thus, my concept of strength embodies selflessness: the ability to dedicate oneself entirely to a cause while possessing foresight. These qualities are essential for leadership, especially when compared to ordinary Communists who may only need a spirit of sacrifice and loyalty to their cause.

H: So, the revolutionary views himself as a historical subject, this is what professor Shi wanted to point out: being a strong person who is simultaneously a Marxist. Moreover, one must selflessly dedicate oneself, sacrificing for historical liberation and breaking through the current historical framework.

Professor Le Blanc, do you have any further thoughts on this point? Mr. Shi indeed holds high moral standards regarding these issues. For him, Marx represents selflessness and dedication. If these qualities define a qualified Marxist, how do you perceive this?

PLB: I think our conversation has been very rich; Perhaps it is time we start closing this discussion while involving more participants by sharing publicly available transcripts soon after this program concludes. I highly value selfless efforts from those organizing this program—there may still be more points worth discussing—but looking forward to continuing dialogues alongside Mr. Shi and comrades here regarding topics we have explored together thus far. I believe we have covered substantial ground already!

SY: Thank you professor Le Blanc for sharing your insights and thoughts with us—you are a revolutionary activist while I am merely a translator.

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Source: [Tempest](#).

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[1] See also "[Interview with Shi Yongqin: Leon Trotsky was a Milestone Figure in the Development of Marxism](#)".