

Introduction to Celia Hart

Celia Hart Santamaria, to use her full name, was a Cuban intellectual, a physicist by training, who wrote for different publications such as *Rebelión*, *Aporrea*, *Kaos en la red* and others between 2003 and 2008. She was a prominent Trotskyist of the island. She unfortunately died very early, at the age of 45, in a car accident, together with her brother Abel.

Hart was the daughter of a couple who were among the historic leaders of the Cuban revolution. Her mother Haydée Santamaria Cuadrado was part of the movement during the attack on the Moncada on 26 July 1953. After the attack, both her fiancé and her brother were killed under torture. She herself was submitted to heavy torture as well, which would mark her for the rest of her life. After her release from prison, she became one of the leaders of the urban leadership of the 26 July movement. After the revolution she established the Casa de las Américas, still today a prestigious cultural establishment for Latin America. In 1965, Haydée Santamaria was one of the five women to be elected to the 100-member Central Committee of the newly formed Communist Party of Cuba. In 1976 she was elected to the Council of State, which was the broad body that was formally charged with running the country. She committed suicide in 1980.

Armando Hart, father of Celia, was one of the founders of the 26 July movement and also a leader of the urban organisation. The contribution of these cadres to the revolution should not be dismissed because they never fought arm in hand. They assumed very heavy duties that ranged from recruiting fighters for the guerrilla to logistic preparations, from conducting relations with other parties to finances, and they ran great risks working in Havana under the nose of Batista. In effect,

Armando Hart was arrested twice before the revolution for aiding and abetting “terrorism”. The first time he was released, but his second prison term ended only when the guerrilla took Havana. After the revolution, Hart was first appointed Minister of Education. He mobilised 100 thousand students to raise the rate of literacy of the country from 75 per cent to 95 per cent within one year. He later served as Minister of Culture and member of the Council of State. When he died in 2017 at 87, he was still a member of the Asamblea Popular.

Hart’s political orientation changed after the revolution. Before the revolution, he was on the moderate wing of the movement that defended an alliance with the bourgeois opposition and even an agreement with the United States, which suspected that Batista was not exactly the best bet for ruling Cuba in the future. When the urban cadre visited the Sierra Madre, serious tension broke out immediately between Hart and Che, the radical Marxist leader of the revolution. This tension may be said to have continued until the taking of power on 1 January 1959. The fate of the Cuban revolution was sealed in 1961, when the revolution grew over into a socialist revolution. Hart himself swiftly radicalised after the revolution, became a figure on the left of the movement and made close friends with Che.

Celia Hart was thus the daughter of a close friend of Che, got to know him as a young child, and became a solid supporter of Che’s ideas as she grew up. She went to the Democratic Republic of Germany to study physics in the 1980s. She became disillusioned by what she saw and became a Trotskyist. Back in Cuba, she told her father (her mother was already dead) that she had become a Trotskyist. He did not react negatively. On the contrary, he gave her some Trotsky books that he had kept under lock!

As will be seen in the article published here, Celia Hart’s Trotskyism relies on a bridge between two heroic figures of world communism in the 20th century, Trotsky and Che. Celia Hart insists on the many similarities and common traits in the Marxism of the great Russian revolutionary who lived in the first half of the 20th century and the great Argentinian-Cuban internationalist of the second half.

We have many differences with Celia Hart. First and foremost among these is her boundless sympathy for Hugo Chávez, the historic leader of the so-called Bolivarian movement, who was also a close ally of Fidel Castro and Cuba. However, it is interesting to note that she makes a scathing attack on the concept of “21st century socialism”, a central concept for the chavistas, one that holds that revolution will be a different thing in this century from the last.

Celia Hart’s writings were brought together posthumously in a book in 2009. The article published here was selected from that book, titled *Escritos Políticos* (2003-2008). The English translation was published in the Marxists Internet Archive. Their source is www.walterlippmann.com. The translation is credited to CubaNews.

Welcome... Trotsky

Celia Hart

The German film, *Good Bye Lenin*, lacks depth. I know because I lived in the German Democratic Republic until shortly before the fall of the Wall. This Wall was knocked down before being built. The terrible tragedy that spread capitalism throughout Eastern Europe cannot be measured in the few years of the vulgar and decadent perestroika, until we saw the statues of Lenin torn down. You can't say good-bye to Lenin since he was never given a welcome. Only an image remains, setting him aside, like a submissive clown, of Stalinist bureaucracy.

The Lenin portrayed in the film was not, by any means, representative of the man who initiated socialism in the world. Those statues were lacking in content ... I suspect also in form.

Of course. We will not understand while Leon Trotsky's life and thoughts remain hidden. It may seem ironic but the only way we can bring Lenin back is to understand the reasons behind the exile of his contemporary. This will not be possible if we do not understand the dark mechanism by which soviet bureaucracy snatched socialism, betrayed the international and trod on the revolutionary spirit of the world.

Of course, we have an alternative. Discovering everything from the beginning; but that will take time and time is running out. We would also be rejecting firsthand information. It's as if a ship begins to sink and the machinist sends notes on the how and the why of its sinking. Then, with a high degree of irresponsibility, we intend to embark on the same seas and try to understand the causes of the catastrophe, burying the bottled message in the sand like the ostrich hiding its

head in the sand.

I agree with Hugo Chávez when he expresses our concerns, more or less using the words of Friedrich Engels, over the urgency to find a balance between socialism and the cockroaches. If it's to be the cockroaches, then barbarism would be an idyllic variance regarding today's world, after grossly estimating the number of times we can exterminate life on Earth.

The 20th century has not ended. The uncertainty that revolutionary practice went through is partially closeted. And if anyone can tell us about the 20th century, that someone is Leon Trotsky.

Ernest Mandel said it better: "Of all the most important socialists of the 20th century, Trotsky was the one who most clearly identified the main tendencies of development and the main contradictions of the times; and it was also Trotsky who clearly set down the proper emancipating strategy for the international workers movement".

Yes, we need Lenin, but he will not come to us if we don't listen to what Trotsky had to say. Both defended the same principle; only Trotsky survived Lenin and knew how to interpret his own life and at the cost of his life. He understood the powers that wanted to destroy socialism. He challenged any thinker who sincerely wanted to interpret history to refer to Trotsky's experiences even to attack them. Those who do not, those who ignore them, are not true Leninists.

They say that without Lenin there is no useful Karl Marx. I would say, on the other hand, that were it not for Trotsky there would be no Lenin. All Marxist thinkers, above all true revolutionary Marxists must understand that Karl Marx did not have a crystal ball to read the future. He only gave revolutionary ideas a direction, a philosophy and, for the first time in history, we would conscientiously pave the way towards our own well being ... globalized.

Let's take the following simile. Socialism is thought of as a tunnel, a true route through which we can pass. It is a world we have to conquer, only losing our chains. Well then: "The October Revolution was the first attempt to carve out that tunnel that Karl Marx pointed to". But Stalinism dynamited it from within. During its construction, dynamite charges were placed to destroy it. Trotsky then was the engineer who located the explosives. But no one listened to him and we already know the end. Devastated Earth.

Now the tunnel is referred to poetically, the one to be built would be socialism of the 21st century. Whether of the 21st or 31st the tunnel can be dynamited by the same insufficiencies and we will continue to cry waiting for socialism to come in the next century... Of course... this time converted into cockroaches.

The possibility of transit towards socialism is a scientific discovery. It is neither a poem nor a way of speaking. The only way we can achieve it is through class struggle. It's that simple. Socialism of the 21st century is simply because this is where we are, in the 21st century. It is almost an understatement. The

discovery of the origin of capitalist exploitation is a scientific truth as valuable as the discovery of the movement of the Earth around the Sun. We don't need Einstein to explain the Law of General Relativity and geodynamics, the reason why we go from summer to autumn. Newton is enough for us. The results are the same and infinite mathematics simpler. We do not have to understand black holes or Hawking's theories to place a satellite in orbit. It may be that communications, informatics, etc., have complicated somewhat the realities of modern capitalism but the essence (the chicken of the **rice and chicken**) continues to be the same as centuries ago. We don't need "quantum economists" or "tensile mathematics" to explain the origin of exploitation and the poverty stricken capitalist system of today.

The so-called socialism of the 21st century is the same as saying we should build a plane in the 21st century. But this plane has to overcome gravity the same way one had to during the 20th century. In this 21st century and for millions of years, the constant G of Universal Gravity continues to be the same one Newton calculated ($G = 6.7 \times 10^{-11} \text{m}^3/\text{Kg s}^2$). I agree that we have to build more comfortable and safer airplanes because the demands of the 21st differ from those of the 20th century but the requirements to overcome gravity are the same. Comparing we could say that our plane tried to overcome gravity in 1917, took flight and crashed against the surface of the earth. It would be better to seek the causes rather than this futuristic analysis, because, regardless of the century, G is still a constant. From the 19th to the 21st centuries the fundamental reasons of capitalist exploitation are the same: the expropriation of work. Then there is only one way to go "from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom". Enough running around because each instant of time is against us.

Our plane fell and now we think that because we have computers, cellular phones or INTERNET we can defy gravity ignoring the G constant. No sir! Gravity is still the same until the planet implodes. We should hurry up and not waste time on rhetoric and assume that once again, the enemy is the same. Perhaps more vulgar, warmongering and dangerous but the same. We should hurry up and learn who we are.

And then, why Leon Trotsky? It's not obstinacy for a historical figure as many accuse me of. It is just because this man has many routes in the black box of that plane that wanted to take off in history.

Sixty-five years ago Leon Trotsky was assassinated in the most grotesque manner. 65 years later we are still splattered by that blood. That assassination should have been enough to wipe out the right of the Kremlin to monopolize and stamp socialist thought; but it continues to do so and now it has become a salt statue. With the Red Star of Ramon Mercader and amidst secret and cowardly cheers the death of true socialism was signed. This assassination was one of the most perverse acts of State terrorism in history because the glorious October

Revolution of 1917 committed suicide that August 20.

After fulfilling his sentence in Mexico, Mercader was in Cuba. I still don't know whom he met, or where he walked, or even he could look directly at either the palms of Martí or the ashes of Mella. He died in Cuba, regardless of how difficult it is for me to accept it. He was the man who had in his hands, perhaps without realizing it, the mission to try to make the left of socialist ideas disappear...it was here during the 60s, during the glorious years of Che Guevara ... It seems almost impossible for me.

Of course, the route of ideological survival of the Cuban revolution has nothing to do with Mercader, the GPU and Stalinism. Quite the contrary; my revolution survives precisely because of the spirit of Leon Trotsky although, paradoxically, we may not know it because it has been hidden in the folds of historical memory.

The truth is stubborn and moves forward slowly, but constantly and unstoppable... There is a mysterious channel in the Cuban revolution that is born with the Cuban Revolutionary Party, fused with Mella; later with the most radical of the 26th of July movement sublimely peaked in Che Guevara. The channel of commitment regardless of class and internationalism. There, in silence, unknown and slandered is Leon Trotsky with a mischievous grin. Why hasn't Trotsky been allowed to relate to the Cuban revolution, for so many years? I've never found out because if there's been a radical and evolving revolution it has been ours. If someone called for radical and evolving revolutions it was, undoubtedly, Leon Trotsky. Perhaps Martí was not wrong when he said that in politics what is real is what is not seen.

We will have to talk quite a deal about Julio Antonio Mella and study his work in Mexico ... but another time. We also have the excellent work of Olivia Gall and Alejandro Gálvez Cancino who, in an absolutely clear, precise and well-documented manner, analyze the communist work of Mella during this period. Aside from the fact that Mella mentioned Trotsky when he returned from the USSR and learned of the Left Opposition through Andrés Nin (killed by the GPU during the Spanish Civil War) or that he wrote in the book, *The Platform of the Opposition*: "For Alberto Martínez to rearm communism, Julio Antonio Mella", his declared Trotskyism is not the most important facet. Much more important were his radical positions in Mexico. In fact and as a political result, "the Trotskyists considered Mella the initiator of a current that later was the Opposition of the Left in the Mexican Communist Party (PCM)" according the historian Olivia Gall.

And it was Julio Antonio Mella who introduced us to the road towards socialism in Cuba. Who built the beautiful bridge between Martí and Bolshevism, who founded our best recent past with the recent future in the world. And regardless of how they would want to wrap him in a pathetic patriotic flag and assign a limited position, it is this Mella, brave, vigorous, controversial ... None other than the

first Cuban communist!

The Stalinism that infected us later and had some relevance for a few years in the socialist revolution is no more than a contagious virus. The socialist ideal managed to survive in spite of it because they were the essence of the revolutionary process. The Stalinist parties did not contribute ideologically to our process, neither when they threw Mella out of the party nor when they made a pact with Machado, nor many other times. Thank God!

There are a lot of Trotskyist comrades around, faithful to the socialist revolution, who have much to tell us ... and grateful for having helped and listened to another committed Marxist who, with Mella is part of the logotype of the Cuban Young Communist Union: Che.

And it is precisely Che, with his star, who I invite to welcome Leon Trotsky on the 65th anniversary of his assassination.

Che Guevara, symbol of the most radical communism set down Trotskyist measures he did not know of. And it is because the true Trotsky theories have the same value of the G constant of Universal Gravitation. Che reached many theses of Trotsky thought on his own, without realizing it ... without being told.

I'll give a few examples when I began to discover a secret communion between them:

Che Guevara was the revolutionary who was most aware of the principles of permanent revolution ... to such an extent that he died defending those principles. But not by simply dying for putting these ideas in practice, but also for arriving intellectually at its essence.

Because it is the 65th anniversary of the assassination of Leon Trotsky I permit myself to refer to three points of permanent revolution.

First Point "The theory of Permanent Revolution revived in 1905 declared war on the democratic objectives of the nationalist and backward bourgeoisie, leading in our times to a dictatorship of the proletariat, putting order to socialist vindications".

Che was conclusive in this point. Let me quote Nestor Kohan: "He (Che) never accepted that, in Latin America (and I would say the world), the task was to build a "national revolution", "democratic", "progressive" or a capitalism with a human face leaving socialism for tomorrow. He strongly and controversially states that if a socialist revolution is not considered, it would be a caricature of a revolution that, in the long run, ends in failure or tragedy as has happened so often".

They are two identical statements. The underdeveloped countries do not have to wait for an Englishman or German to decide to organize to make the revolution. What's more it was Trotsky who mentioned in the Manifest of the Conference of Emergency of the Fourth International in May of 1940 "...the perspective of the permanent revolution does not mean that the backward countries have to wait for

a sign from the advanced countries nor must the colonial peoples wait patiently to be liberated by the proletariat of the metropolitan centers”. Help yourselves!

Second Point: theoretically specifies socialist revolution as such. During a period of indefinite time and constant internal struggles all social relations are transformed. Society suffers a metamorphosis (...) This process has a political characteristic (...) Revolutions of the economy, of technology, of science, of family (...) are unfurled in a complex reciprocal action that does not allow society to reach equilibrium.

And Che said in *Socialism and Man in Cuba*:

“During this period of construction of socialism we can see the new man being born. His image is still not complete and could never be while the process continues in parallel with the development of new economic forms”. According to Che “the only time to rest for revolutionaries is the tomb”.

The Third point: is the international. Trotsky said: “This aspect of the theory of permanent revolution is an inevitable result of the current state of the economy and the social structure of humanity, only a theoretical reflection. Internationalism is not an abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the world character of the economy (...) Socialist revolution begins inside national borders: but cannot keep within them. The enclosure of a proletarian revolution within a national regime can only be transitory, although it may take a long time, as seen in the experience of the Soviet Union. However, with the existence of a dictatorship of the proletariat, internal and external contradictions grow in parallel to its successes. If the proletarian State continues to be isolated it will collapse sooner or later, victim of those contradictions”.

Referring to revolutionaries, Che said: “If their revolutionary desires are dulled when the most important tasks are achieved locally and forget proletarian internationalism, the revolution they lead stops being a moving force reaching a comfortable laziness that is taken advantage of by our enemies; imperialism gains ground. Internationalism is a duty but also a revolutionary necessity”.

I am not going to dwell on this point too long. If anyone fought more to make the Cuban revolution more socialist, it was Che. Che launched the construction of socialism in a devastated land and deepened the socialist character ... and he gave it all up for the world revolution. I know of no other who did this. I believe there was no one more faithful to the thesis of permanent revolution. If the conditions in Bolivia were or were not propitious ... is the subject of another analysis and not of a permanent revolution. We can criticize him for being too much in favor of a permanent revolution or too consistent.

And another point taking into consideration a difference of circumstances, brings the thoughts of Trotsky to those of Che and is, undoubtedly, the decided option for a planned economy. It is true that, at the beginning, Trotsky favored the NEP in the young soviet state considering the terrible economic conditions of

what he referred to as the Communism of War.

But later, and since the beginning, Trotsky criticized the state of things. He maintained, as Isaac Deutscher said “the transition of the NEP, the need for planning had become urgent (...) since the country again began to live under a market economy it had to try to control that market and be prepared to control it. He again promoted the demand of One Plan whereby it was impossible to control production, concentrate resources of heavy industry and set up a balance between the different sectors of the economy”.

Che’s position in favor of planning and his aversion to NEP are well known. In fact Che insisted that if Lenin had had time he would have reconsidered this measure. And not only to planning: Che, in his last years, spoke of socialist democracy. Michael Lowy wrote in *Rebelión* about his last two years: “We know that during the last two years of the life of Ernesto Guevara he moved to separate himself from the Soviet paradigm (...) A radical criticism is found in these documents to the Manual of Political Economy of the Science Academy of the USSR issued in 1966 (...) One point is very interesting because it demonstrates that, in his last political analyses, Guevara approached the idea of a socialist democracy”.

And there was Che without having studied Leon Trotsky enough promoting Trotskyist theses more consistently. Perhaps he never knew it, but it doesn’t matter. This only proves that these theses are true and grants them, paradoxically, much more strength and vigor to the thoughts of Trotsky. In 1965 Che wrote to Armando Hart while he was in Tanzania of his convictions about the study of Marxist philosophy. In the 7th point he writes “And your friend Trotsky should be here who exited and wrote it seems.”

You can imagine how little he knew about the founder of the Red Army. However, it would seem that in his last year he could approach his writings. Juan León Ferrer a Trotskyist comrade who worked in the Ministry of Industry told me. Che also received the paper of his organization and it was Che who got him out of jail on his return from Africa. Roberto Acosta, deceased, had a great camaraderie with Guevara. According to Juan León Ferrer they debated those issues during the sugar cane harvest. This comrade maintains that Che had read *The Permanent Revolution* and everyone knows that he went to Bolivia with the *History of the Russian Revolution* in his backpack.

We could offer many more examples in which these two outstanding revolutionaries light the way in the same direction.

Both directed an army and a new socialist state brilliantly and successfully with Karl Marx in the lead; the two were revolutionary ideologues, who took power and tried to deepen the revolutionary process maintaining loyalty to Lenin and Fidel, respectively, both leaning to the left. For having represented the most complete ideal of internationalism and revolutionary commitment, they were

both brutally assassinated.

Ernesto Guevara made me a Trotskyist. When I had access to Trotsky, very light for my liking, I understood many things ... Che had told me when I was a child. Reading the first pages I confirmed what I had felt before: that revolution has no national idiosyncrasy and that, for this reason, socialism has no space for the pronoun “ours” or “yours”; that revolutionary theory, the same as the laws of physics, has a universal language. As Armando Hart said once: “Our struggle is not only Cuban but of all the workers and all the exploited peoples in the world. Our borders are moral. Our limits are class-based”.

What I recognize about Trotsky is... his manner of talking, the passion that his speeches awaken in me. In the same way Che Guevara won me over. That is why I am a militant in his force and in Che without betraying any one. Both promote the true light of the word, rifle and heart.

Comrades. Let us reach our majority of age. There are too many injustices of exploitation, too much evidence of only one solution; and we have too many deaths. Leon Trotsky calls us to the struggle again. We must welcome him without obstacles! His host is Che Guevara and the peoples of Latin America who call for socialism. Trotsky dramatically won the theoretic move. Let us arm our revolutionary movements without delay, with confidence. Trotsky and Che are on our side. Let us decide to shake the tree strongly, revealing the new reformists that try to hinder the Bolivarian revolution that has become the spearhead, the first step for an unprecedented continental revolution.

Let us remember once more that the Sun, the stars... and gravity are our allies. Workers of the world, unite!