For many years, Trotsky was an impossible subject for a Marxist. The struggle in the Bolshevik Party in the twenties produced such a violent polarization of his image within the international working-class movement that all rational discussion of his person and works ceased. Overpowered any other potential contributors to a debate, within Marxism, on Trotsky’s true historical role. It is surely significant that there has never been any Marxist appraisal of Deutscher’s work, of a quality that matched its stature. The aim of this essay is to approach such a problem: how should we judge Trotsky as a Marxist? This means comparing him with Lenin (rather than with Stalin) and trying to see what is the specific unity of his theoretical writings and his practice as a politician. Discussing Trotsky’s Marxism, it highlights its originality, its dialectical quality, and well as its democratic-revolutionary tendency, which inspired not only his opposition to Stalinism, but already, in his early writings, a critique of organisational fetishism in the revolutionary movement.

Michael Löwy, Research director in Sociology, National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France; author of The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development, and The Marxism of Che Guevara. Issues of the Journal of Trotsky Studies. Paul LeBlanc has been not merely a great help but a major source of inspiration, perhaps more than the footnotes reveal. At the turn of the century, in an early essay, Trotsky has rejected the view that history is merely the tale of murder, race hatred and the like. The Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky who, in the years before his murder in 1940, broke from the unscrupulous optimism of Marxist orthodoxy on the Jewish question. This essay is about how and why he did so, the alternative approach he began to put in its place, and the relevance of that alternative for the Left today. What Traverso has called Trotsky’s ‘practical…nonsystematised’ Marxism, at odds with any form of evolutionist and positivist Marxism surely helped make possible his global revision on the Jewish question.[11] In part three, I ask if Trotsky ended his life as a Zionist. Here is the passage Geras cites, from Trotsky’s book 1905: The gang rushes through the town, drunk on vodka and the smell of blood. Thus, against Trotsky’s admirers, I locate his Marxism as both emerging out of, in addition to breaking with, Second International Marxism; while, against his critics, I argue that it was precisely the strengths of this earlier interpretation of Marxism that informed Trotsky’s powerful contributions to historical materialism: his concept of combined and uneven development and his discussion of the role of... If Shandro can be faulted for his tendency to dismiss other contemporaneous contributions to the renewal of Marxism, his book nonetheless shows that Lenin’s understanding of the struggle for hegemony was a pivotal moment in this process that remains an indispensable contribution to Marxism. This book is correctly regarded as one of Trotsky’s finest classics. It is a product of a sharp polemic within the American Trotskyist movement during the period 1939-40. This was a dispute which touched on the very fundamentals of Marxism. It was for this reason that Trotsky himself participated in this struggle in the form of a series of articles and letters that are brought together in this volume. The issues covered concern the essence of Marxist theory and deal with such questions as: * The class nature of the Soviet state.