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RUSSIA CANNOT REMAIN COMMUNISTIC, IF WORKERS
ELSEWHERE DO NOT AID - TROTZKY

Former Leader Guarded in Exile

Leon Trotzky
Exiled Soviet Leader,
in an interview with
Albert Weisbord

It was my good fortune to spend three weeks with Leon Davidowich Trotzky.

For this privilege I was willing to travel the six thousand miles from New York City to Turkey. From Istanbul, I made the last lap in a little steamer that sailed out of the Golden Horn to the island of Buyuk Ada (Prinkipo) in the Sea of Marmora.

There, facing the sea, surrounded by a high wall, was the house of Trotzky.

I went to the gate. A swarthy Turkish special officer barred my way.

The illusion of "vacation" at once evaporated. This was not "vacation," but exile, and not only exile, but jail. The prisoner could walk about, he could take his boat and fish, but always with the officers at his side.

Trotzky rents a large, pleasant two-storied house. On the ground floor are the living quarters of those comrades who aid him, and of the cook, a pleasant German woman. Above are the quarters of his immediate family (including his wife and grandson) and his office, library and study.

I was taken into the study where Trotzky was working on the second volume of his "History of the Russian Revolution." What I saw was a strongly-built, stocky, medium-sized figure of 53 or so.

Exile apparently has not withered his strength, even though the climate has given him the malaria from which he suffered intensely in hot weather and though he is on a diet due to stomach trouble.

EYES SNAP

Trotzky Is Combination of Grace and Strength

His familiar thick mane of hair, formerly jet black, is now streaked with gray. But his eyes still snap behind

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the thick glasses, and his firm features hold all their aggressiveness. The strong, well-shaped hands, broad back, graceful carriage, healthy, glowing tanned skin, the brilliant smile that illumines all his features, everything about Trotsky suggests a combination of grace and strength, of brilliance and reserve, of biting humor and relentless determination.

He speaks slowly and decisively, like his written style, compact with thought, and scintillating with striking phrases. "The style is the man" indeed.

Trotsky showed a tremendous catholicity of views. He talked of China, India, Germany, Italy, Spain, America, Russia, the Negro question, the labor party question in America, the world economic crisis, the personal traits of the leading actors on the European political stage today, literature, military tactics; on all these questions Trotsky showed himself a broadly informed man with unusual penetration. I asked him:

"What do you think of the German situation?"

"To me," Trotsky replied, "Germany is the key to the international situation. Let us look at the East - Japan will not attack Russia immediately. In Asia things go more slowly. Japan will have her hands full for a while with Manchuria, which can well become for her what Morocco was to the Spanish dynasty.

"Besides, Japan has far too much respect for the new Red Army of Russia to try war without a guaranty from the West.

"The West is decisive. If the world is to turn Communist it must come from the contradictions in the West. And the key to the West, to Europe, lies in Germany."

"In the face of these conditions, it is disturbing to find that all working class revolutions in Germany have been defeated, that the Communist party does not grow, and, to cap it all, a great growth of Fascism is taking place under the direction of Hitler's Nazis."

"What do you consider the reason for this growth of Fascism?" I asked. "And what will become of it?"

"Hitler in power signifies the actual massacre of the Communists and their virtual elimination, together with the destruction of the German trade unions.

"Such developments cut down the Communist parties everywhere. They remove the greatest obstacle to a world war against Soviet Russia - namely, the resistance of the organized international working class.

PREDICTS

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PREDICTS

United States-Soviet Conflict

"Soviet Russia cannot remain indefinitely Communist if the workers elsewhere cannot aid it, despite the internal strength of Russia, fortified by the five-year plan."

I questioned Trotzky as to his opinions on America.

"America," he said, "is the great reserve of world capitalism. The United States is the very antithesis of the Soviet Union and sooner or later these two titans must come to a life-and-death grip.

"This, of course, does not prevent them from having many things temporarily in common, as the hostility to Japan's Manchurian adventure, the absence of both the United States and the Soviet Union from the League of Nations, and the trade and technical relations between America and Russia showed.

"For America has to fight not only Russia, but the British Empire and the attempt to organize a United States of Europe against the power of America. As capitalist Europe had striven to 'Americanize' itself industrially, so America will become 'Europeanized' politically."

"And what chance is there for a strong Communist party in the U. S. A.?" I queried.

"There is no doubt in my mind," was his answer, "that now in the United States class lines will have to be openly recognized and a mass workers' party emerge.

CRUDE

So Trotzky Characterizes U. S. Communist Party

"Whether such a party will take the form of a labor party, in the English sense, or the mass growth of a Socialist or Communist party or some unique combination, it is difficult to say, but it is quite certain that whether in the worst period of the crisis, or when a possible upturn takes place, such a class politics will arise.

"But your Socialist and Communist movements are the worst of any," he exclaimed. "There is no Socialist party so corrupt as the American one, no Communist party so crude as the Communist party of the United States, and no 'Right Wing' group of Communists so crassly opportunist as the American. But the leaders of these elements will be pushed aside by the virile working class movements that are bound to arise.

"Should a Labor party be organized by such a spontaneously arising working class movement it is the duty of the Communists, even if they have to join it, constantly to criticize it and expose its limitedness.

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"On no account must the Communists help to organize a Labor party, but must build a Communist party in opposition to it."

It is evident that Trotsky's years of exile and imprisonment have not impaired him in the least. I have seen him at work from early morning till late at night. We have gone fishing together at 3 in the morning and I have seen him retire the same evening only at 11 or 12 o'clock.

Fishing now is his great hobby. And to fish with Trotsky is in itself great sport.

To watch him cunningly creep up on the places where he thought fish might abound and deftly spread the nets around, to see him seize the rocks previously collected in the boat and hurl them in the water, driving the fish into the nets; to see his eyes sparkle and his enthusiasm grow as the nets would be brought up loaded with beautiful specimens; to share his humor as the fish were picked from the net and collected and to enjoy with him the fish caught that day at the dinner table - this was a pleasure indeed.

Sometimes the fishing was not so good. Then Trotsky's face would reflect this great failure of man against nature. We would stay out all morning. Natalia, his wife, would grow anxious and send the outboard motor boat (of American make) after us with breakfast and sometimes with dinner. We would eat bread and cheese and perhaps an egg on the boat and go on fishing.

Trotsky indeed is an inveterate fisherman, going out in all kinds of weather, such to the worry of all of us and to the discomfort of the police guards, especially once, when a storm coming up on the Sea of Marmora drove the little rowboat on the rocks where Trotsky was stranded and drenched all night.

INVETERATE

Trotsky Fishes in All Kinds of Weather.

However, fishing cannot quite take the place of hunting, a sport which Trotsky misses. He is a very good shot. Once, laughingly, he pointed out how difficult it was to shoot wild ducks with a pistol, and then, seeing one riding the waves far from us, tried to get it with his automatic. The duck started ducking when Trotsky began to shoot.

It is well that Trotsky knows how to shoot, for he may be called upon to use that art. Tens of thousands of old Russian White Guards reside in Istanbul, many of whom frequent Buyuk Ada.

As we go fishing, anxiously we scan the shore without letting the "Old Man" know of it, to see if there is someone lurking in the woods to take a shot.

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As we eat, someone patrols the grounds; a guard is kept all night watching the place; but even these precautions cannot be very effective. What could a little guard of three men do if a real attack were made?

And there is no question that with his death a truly great man would leave the scene.

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