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Dorothy Woodward

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## Leon Trotsky in Mexico

By DOROTHY WOODWARD

MEXICO CITY wakened again as the goldenly brilliant sunshine lit the distant hills and the fresh, clean breeze of a rain-swept air blew through the windows. In the distance, one could hear the hum of the city, the motor busses along the Paseo de la Reforma and the tread of sandaled feet as Indian carriers trotted along toward the markets. From afar came the sound of a drum and by leaning out the window, one might glimpse a small troop of khaki-clad soldiers marching down the avenue after their night of guard duty. It was all as yesterday and yet so different! For today there was a real adventure on hand. Today had been long expected, by some hesitantly, by others heartily, for this was the day we were to see and speak with the great Russian revolutionary, Mr. Leon Trotsky.

Hastily dressing, we went down eagerly to join the other *Seminaristas* in the hotel dining room and lobby. An air of expectancy pervaded the group. Not everyone was enthusiastic. Some were merely curious and others frankly hostile. But, whatever the personal anticipation, it was to all a stilling incident.

The day before, we had been at Diego Rivera's studio where we learned that Mr. Trotsky had arrived in the city. One of his secretaries came in, saying with fervor, "He telephoned me; he is here." One could not see the devotion and concern of the younger man without wondering and becoming more curious as to the personality of the leader who inspired such devotion.

And now this was the day! No announcement of the conference had been made public; too much danger, said some, too much criticism, said others. But we knew that Mr. Trotsky had come up from the country to give this single day in Mexico City to the Twelfth Seminar of the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America.

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Every member of the group, who wished it, had received a card of identification for admittance to the conference, and at 10:30, armed with this small passport, we set out for Coyacan and the home of Frieda Rivera. It was not a long drive and we enjoyed the sights of city and country as we sped along. Nearing the *colonia*, we were aware of police, many police. A motor guard preceded us, and at intervals along the road were stationed more blue-uniformed figures. Mexico guards Trotsky well, we thought!

Presently we alighted before the walled entrance of an interesting country house. Very unlike the bizarre, cactus-enclosed, blue and pink, modern homes of the Riveras at San Angel, this place had the air of soft moss-covered walls and well-flowered patios, while San Angel is a little metallic in its brilliance and novelty.

As we were admitted into the entryway, police guards scrutinized us carefully. Then, upon the presentation of our identification cards, we were admitted through a small door, checked again by Vica Iturbe, a Mexican friend of the Riveras, and at last we stepped out into a sun-filled, lushly growing patio. You almost felt a hush as birds sang in the beauty of that semi-tropical garden.

We went, at once, into a long room, bare except for cases filled with books by N. Lenin and other Russian and liberal idealists. A few wooden chairs were lined up in the rear of the room and a couple of small tables had been placed along the north side. Warm sunshine poured in through open windows and doors, as we excitedly found places in chairs and on the floor to await the arrival of Mr. Trotsky.

Presently everyone was settled and the hush of waiting possessed us. Doors opened and closed in other parts of the building, blue-uniformed police guards were seen crossing the patio, and there was the sound of voices across the open space, and an occasional laugh. In a short time, two of Mr. Trotsky's aides came in and took their places at the tables. They were to act as interpreters and, when one looked

closely, one could see they were carefully armed to protect their chief. Several secretaries also arranged themselves to record the interview and, when the stage was finally set, Mr. Trotsky and Mr. Herring, Director of the Seminar, appeared walking across the patio. Amid friendly applause, they entered the room and took their places at the tables.

Mr. Trotsky is a dynamic little person. His flashing, steel-blue eyes took in the entire group at a glance. His smile was kindly and his slight grey-clad figure moved with a nervous tension that indicated the energy and vitality of the man. Although he had not been well, his poise and vigor were apparent from his first step into the room.

When the bustle of getting seated was over, people relaxed to listen to what Mr. Trotsky, the man of the 1917 Russian Revolution, might say. It had been agreed that he should speak in English and answer questions that anyone in the audience desired to address to him through the chairman in writing. Thus, as a starting point, Mr. Herring asked whether Mr. Trotsky agreed with Mr. Max Eastman that the experiment of socialism in Russia is at an end and would he sketch the successive steps by which the Soviet's Union had dropped overboard every vestige of socialism.

Mr. Trotsky rose, listening intently to the question, then his face beamed in a smile and he began, speaking a little hesitantly at times for he used English, "Permit me, ladies and gentlemen, a preliminary remark." His command of the situation was evident at once. He then said that in this room the hearings under Mr. John Dewey had taken place. During that time Mr. Trotsky had to speak often of his "terroristic activities," "life with Hitler," and "his wrecking." When he used these phrases his lawyer had interrupted by saying your *alleged* terroristic activities, your *alleged* alliance with Hitler, your *alleged* crimes. "Thus," said Mr. Trotsky, "I learned this cautious word and now may I speak in my *alleged* English?"

Needless to say, it would be impossible to review the entire discussion, which lasted for several hours. But some

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points of interest may be touched upon. Mr. Trotsky's reply to the initial inquiry was to the effect that he disagreed with Max Eastman. Socialism is not at an end although he asserted that the beginning and the end of an historical process were not easy to determine. Again quoting the article by Mr. Eastman, who said that, barring revolutionary events, the degeneration toward capitalism is inevitable, Trotsky countered by saying that the October Revolution had created certain premises of socialism, a new form of property, and a new political power of a new class. For building up socialism, and the development of new economic conditions the decisive factor is the level of productive forces, which is too low. But from the point of view of socialism the form of property as created by the October Revolution persists, the forces are not annihilated. Again the productive forces are higher than formerly but the political power has degenerated. Now the Russian people are in a transition period dependent upon the state. When the new socialistic society, that is the new state of socialism, actually comes into existence as socialism, the state will disappear. Thus the fact that the political state guides the development toward socialism is evidence that the socialistic state has not yet been achieved; and if the state degenerates, if the new ruling class is, because of its interest, against socialism, then the question of building a truly socialistic state becomes problematic. If, however, the toiling masses have the power, their interests, asserted Mr. Trotsky, will push them in the direction of socialism. On the other hand, the new ruling, privileged class concentrating power within its hands endangers the development of pure socialism. And this is the present situation in the Soviet Union. There exists the premise for a new socialism, there is the growth of the productive forces, and at the same time, there has come into being a new ruling class which is by nature hostile to the socialistic system. If, by revolution, the people, "the toiling masses," can overthrow this new controlling stratum of society, then socialism will not be at an end.

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When questioned relative to his attitude toward the trials in Russia and the ensuing executions, Mr. Trotsky replied that the events implied symptoms of sharp conflict between the new bureaucracy and the people. Queries led from this to the confession of those taken in the second trial when they realized that the same procedure had not saved their compatriots from execution. To this Mr. Trotsky responded that some hope of escape was held out to these condemned in that four were to be released, just what four they did not know, but willingness to confess was accelerated by that spark of hope and the psychological state resultant from long education by the GPU.

It was most interesting to hear Mr. Trotsky discuss the circumstances that led to his failure to succeed Lenin as the leader of Russia. He stated that it was pure accident that he had not followed the great Lenin. For, after the Revolution, a new chapter was begun and the new bureaucracy, following its instinct as a new ruling class, rejected the revolutionists, which marked a new crystallization of social elements. For, said Mr. Trotsky, the new group was reactionary, unwilling to continue the changes necessary to transform completely Russian society; instead they decreed against the permanent revolution. Hence, he and the leaders in the October Revolution became refugees from the land of their birth and struggle.

Mr. Trotsky feels strongly that the movement toward a truly socialistic state certainly is not completed. The power for further change rests upon the workers of the world, who can, in a great mass movement, free themselves from the bonds of economic control.

For hours the dynamic little man spoke, hunting now and then for an English word, repeating a phrase in French or German for which his interpreters supplied the English equivalent. His hands moved with quick nervous motion, his eyes snapped, his smile came and went, and his enthusiastic vigor was ever manifest. Through it all Diego Rivera stood in the patio, his great body supported by his folded arms as

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he leaned against a window, listening and observing.

Freida Rivera moved about in the patio, a beautiful woman, dressed in the colorful Indian clothes of Mexico.

It was all very vital and very real. Finally Mr. Trotsky finished speaking—he had talked for hours, yet seemed singularly fresh and vigorous. He begged to retire, and as he grasped our hands in parting, one dominating impression of the tiny man was paramount. Genial, kindly, and full of sympathy for the world's great suffering, this visionary lived for a cause, the world revolution of the workers, and for this cause there was no sacrifice too great. Steel, as hard as any ever made by man, is soft beside the invincible purpose of an almost fanatical conviction that the cause must and will live! This combination of human kindness and unswerving fervor is Leon Trotsky!

Beyond the Tumult

By JOHN DILLON HUSBAND

The last hard sigh  
And the final word  
Are fragments of  
A speech unheard.

They are a smoke  
Sent up through trees;  
A speaking sign  
To one who sees.

They are a song  
That strikes a cloud  
And frees the music  
From the shroud.