

September 10, 1938

p. 5

An Exile in Mexico

SO GRATIFYING was the response to my interview with Dr. Thomas Mann, that when I found myself in Mexico close to the home of Leon Trotsky, it occurred to me that Scripters might be interested in meeting another great world figure in exile.

The unexpected opportunity came while I was a guest at the home of Diego Rivera, who gladly promised to arrange it for the next afternoon at five. We were on hand promptly, only to be greeted by other guests enjoying the Rivera hospitality. Diego talked, the guests listened, and as the Mexican minutes flew, I realized with a sinking heart that there would be no Trotsky for us that day.

A second appointment was made for *mañana* at 11:00 A.M. sharp. *Mañana* turned out to be a cool, clear, sunny Mexican morning, and we were on our way to Coyoacan. Or so we thought. Alfonso, our guide, believing we had kept yesterday's appointment was hell-bent for the Pyramids, and we were almost halfway there before I detected the error. Twenty-five minutes to eleven and thirty miles away! Without attempting to describe the return trip and the state of our nerves, we somehow managed to pick up Diego and arrived at the pink-walled house at 11:05 A.M. This was the former residence of Frida Rivera and her family, now a sanctuary for the man who once held the destiny of a great nation in the palm of his hand.

Once past the guards, genial Joe Hansen of Omaha led the way through the patio, down the flowered walk to the cheerful library.

Trotsky in Exhile

Behind a large desk littered with papers and books—mute evidence of tremendous activity—sat Leon Trotsky. We looked around for Diego, but he had vanished, to leave us alone with his friend. Mr. Trotsky met us with such a cordial smile that we were put immediately at ease. Turning to my daughter who hesitated in the background, he inquired about her singing and requested that she take a seat near him.

As he talked, I noted his fiery blue eyes set deep in a slender face. The dark Van Dyke beard and hair had turned gray, yet his face was young and tremendously alive. Before long we were off on the subject of "world problems." You may or may not agree with his political theories, theories which are being universally discussed today; nevertheless you sit spellbound at the energy and dynamic personality of the man himself. For he speaks with a conviction and decisiveness that is overwhelming. The fiery oratory of other years is still smoldering beneath that disarming smile and gentle voice.

We talked not only of the world leaders of today but of writers, musicians, and composers, and especially of our friend Igor Stravinsky, whose compositions he admires tremendously. We walked out into the garden, where Mr. Rivera joined us, and the two friends embraced. I longed for a camera. No need; within five minutes I was presented with a splendid informal photograph of the men which Mr. Trotsky autographed for me. I begged permission to publish the highlights of our conversation. No! But if I would jot down some of my questions, he would be delighted to answer them on paper and sign this special interview which you have just finished reading on the opposite page.

—Gladys Lloyd Robinson
(continued)

International Big Stuff Discussed by Leon Trotsky

in an exclusive interview with

Gladys Lloyd Robinson

Script Again Scoops

With scores of reporters hanging around to interview Leon Trotsky and unable to get by even one of the guards, in prances Gladys Robinson, SCRIPT's charming and beautiful reporter, guided by her palsy-walsies, the Diego Riveras, and nails the world's most famous refugee for an interview in which he does not talk about the birds and the flowers, or even motion pictures (!), but "says things" that square off a lot of misconceptions. Read it and weep, or cheer, or sumthin!

Rob Wagner

QUESTION: What do you think of President Roosevelt as a *man*?

ANSWER: Even his most bitter opponents do not venture to deny his exceptional personality. Without doubt he possesses more outstanding personal qualities than the modern dictators, Mussolini, Hitler, not to speak of Stalin. I admit it the more readily since an abyss separates my program from the program of Mr. Roosevelt.

QUESTION: What is your opinion of Mr. Roosevelt's measures to alleviate the social and economic ills in the United States? How would you handle the self-same situation?

ANSWER: These measures have a purely palliative nature. Private property paralyzes further economic development of the United States. Under these conditions social reforms are but the expenditure of accumulations for the amelioration of the most glaring social ills. It is clear that this method does not open up wide perspectives. A program which wishes to maintain the foundations of capitalism untouched cannot offer a way out of the crisis.

You ask me how I should have acted in the place of Mr. Roosevelt. But I could not be in his place—we express opposing historical interests. Mr. Roosevelt desires to ameliorate the situation of

Trotsky in Exhile

the toilers in so far as it is necessary to *save* the capitalist system. I see the only way out through liquidating it once and for all.

QUESTION: What do you believe will be the final outcome of Mr. Hitler and Mussolini?

ANSWER: In the next great war the fascist regimes will be the first to collapse. Hypothetically we can lay down the following order in the catastrophes: Japan, Italy, Germany. Fascism is a temporary historic means for suppressing irreconcilable internal contradictions. In war time they will, however, burst to the surface with such force as perhaps the history of humanity has not yet known. In place of fascism will come the socialist revolution.

QUESTION: What will be England's fate in the next war?

ANSWER: The economic power of England long ago ceased to correspond to the gigantic magnitude of her empire. The interests of the metropolis and of the colonies and the dominions are deeply contradictory in all parts of the world. During the first period of the war the different parts of the Empire might temporarily be brought closer together through the instinct of self-preservation; but at the end of the war Great Britain will inevitably fall apart, and this in turn will lead to social convulsions in England.

QUESTION: Will the final result of the present conflict in Spain give us the answer to the immediate political system of Europe?

ANSWER: The second collapse of Spanish democracy within the last six years shows with unusual force that the framework of democracy is much too narrow for the solution of the social problem. Capitalism in the future can maintain its existence only with the help of open military violence. Since Caballero, Garcia Oliver, Negrin, and Stalin prevented the Spanish proletariat from conquering power for the socialist revolution, the state inevitably fell into the hands of Franco. Only political blindness could not foresee this outcome.

Trotsky in Exhile

QUESTION: Do you believe that democracy has failed in America?

ANSWER: The blossoming of American democracy was based on the blossoming of American capitalism. Naturally, therefore, the incurable crisis of capitalism is transformed into a grave crisis of democracy.

QUESTION: Is Mayor Hague a symbol of menace to American democracy—how strong a menace?

ANSWER: Yes, I think that Mayor Hague has very great political significance which far exceeds his own very trivial and limited personality. Through his actions Hague says that the capitalist regime can no longer be upheld by democratic means. It is true that Hague himself denies the fascist characteristics of his policy. But long ago he had a forerunner who spoke in prose without suspecting it. The number of imitators of Hague will inevitably grow. It is impossible to overcome fascism by constitutional means since fascism operates on a different level.

QUESTION: When do you think that the present chaotic condition of the world will reach a crisis?

ANSWER: I do not undertake predictions as to dates. Nevertheless the present tense situation cannot last years. The denouement must begin in a very short space of time. It can take the form of either war or revolution. At the present moment war seems closer than revolution. But war will undoubtedly carry revolution in its wake.

QUESTION: How do you think the youth of the world will meet these problems?

ANSWER: The new generation of toilers and intellectuals enters conscious mental life under absolutely exceptional historic conditions—crisis of the world economic system, collapse of democracy, disintegration of the Socialist and Communist Internationals, increasing rottenness of the Soviet bureaucracy, the deepening danger of war. Under these conditions civilization can be saved only by exceptionally daring revolutionary means. In order to find these means, it is necessary to review the

OldMagazineArticles.com

6
Trotsky in Exhile

means, it is necessary to review the old heritage critically. That is why I think that the new generation will distinguish itself by great daring of thought and will. It will reject the philosophy of half-measures. It will demand complete answers to the problems of our epoch, and it will lend its force to transform these answers into life. Only under these conditions can humanity move forward.

Leon Trotsky

August 18, 1938, Coyoacan, D. F., Mex.