

Trotsky. Was a Starving Idealist While Here

Bolshevik Leader Left Impress on Thousands on the East Side by Speeches and Writings—How His Worth Is Estimated

By JOHN WALKER HARRINGTON.

TROTSKY'S career in New York as a starving idealist takes on a new meaning in the fierce light that beats about the empty, golden throne of the Romanoffs.

He left an indelible impress upon the minds and hearts of thousands of followers in this city who are now openly avowing their beliefs in his teachings. Although his disciples have no hard and fast organization of their own, they are bound to him in spirit. Bolshevism, outside of Russia, is, like Boston, a state of mind.

In the realm of Muscovy the Bolsheviks, it will be recalled, are the members of the extreme or left wing of the Russian Socialists. When their party was insignificant they arrogated to themselves their present designation, which means "majority." The wish being the father of their destiny, they found the title fitted well when they came into control, for now they are Bolsheviks or Maximalists in fact as well as in name.

A Prophet With Honor Now.

Trotsky, now a prophet with honor in his own country, was busy sowing the seeds of Bolshevism, which came to such abundant fruition in Russia, while he was living here as a shabby and poverty stricken seer of his creed of internationalism. The mutterings of discontent and resentment against the war which are now being heard in the Central Empires are the justification his followers point to for those radical tenets which he zealously sought to inculcate during his brief stay in the United States.

When he existed in this city, for he lived too miserably to be said to have done more than that, Trotsky was among the minority of his comrades of the Red. He had been driven out of Russia, France, England, Germany, Switzerland and Spain, and he finally landed in New York, to which port he had come by way of Cuba.

Trotsky obtained employment as an editorial writer on a radical Russian Socialist paper, the *Novy Mir* (The New World), from which he received \$15 a week. His home was a four room flat in Vyse avenue, The Bronx, where he housed and scantily fed his wife and two children. His furniture, valued at \$200, was bought on the instalment plan and was only half paid for last March when the success of the Russian revolution emboldened him to start back for his native land.

Sent Home by Subscription.

With punctilious care he turned over his scanty household furnishings to a poet with instructions either to pay for them or to give them back to the dealer from which they had been bought. He and his family were enabled to depart from these shores through the fact that a subscription was raised among Russian revolutionists to pay their passage. As soon as Trotsky reestablished himself in the Russia from which he had been so long an exile he sent to his friends in this city remittances which paid his obligations in full.

Meetings of the Russian-American radicals were held last Sunday in Beethoven Hall, in Fifth street, where as far as could be seen by the votes of the living voices uncontrolled by parliamentary usage the Soviet of the Bolsheviks was accepted as the rule of belief and action by those present. The Mensheviks, or the minority element, held indignation meetings on the floor below the main hall, where the majority was in session.

The Bolsheviks of New York, however, although lacking coherent organization, are manifesting more and more interest openly in the affairs of Russia.

To get in touch with the Bolshevik spirit in New York fostered by Trotsky one should know the East Side well. His followers are found most in the Second avenue cafes, where Russian caravan tea is served piping hot in tall glasses. There the air is thick with cigarette smoke and surcharged with the vapors of radicalism.

In such places as these Loeb Bronstein, the Russian Jew whose pen name of Leon Trotsky is trumped by fame, was accustomed to talk with his little group of followers.

He spoke only a little English, although he had the Russian gift for languages which enabled him to talk well in French and German and other Continental tongues besides his own. He was familiar with the whole range of Socialist literature and had a thorough knowledge of political economy.



LEON TROTSKY, BOLSHEVIK MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

His followers were among the pale and generally dishevelled intellectuals of the East Side, who could appreciate an idealism which considered creature comforts as nothing. Usually unshaven, with a wisp of scraggy beard on the tip of his chin and a discouraged looking mustache to balance it, there was little about the Trotsky of those days to suggest the alert, well groomed statesman we now see in the published photographs.

Typical of the Trotsky following then and now is Alexander Menshoy, editor of the *Novy Mir*, who was often seen at the right hand of the unkempt seer. Menshoy was originally a teacher in his native Russia and he speaks with that pedagogical precision which goes with his former profession. His English is pure and faultless, although spoken with the deliberation of scanty use.

Menshoy is as careful in his dress as Trotsky was careless. He looks at the world quizzically out of round spectacles with eyes which reveal the supercritical mind of the Socialist thinker.

Then there is long haired Sholom Asch, the playwright, upon whom Trotsky conferred the instalment burden, who speaks in epigrams and gives to radical teachings many a clever and caustic phrase. With Trotsky there often sat the long bearded fathers of Russian Israel who had come to question him about his political doctrines. Sometimes there came to him students from the universities of the upper city who had thumbed over his pamphlets and were studying his interpretations of the Marxian cult.

Some of His Friends.

Among these were Leon Samson, president of the Collegiate League for Peace, under whose auspices a mass meeting was held which was described as the organization of an American branch of the Bolsheviks. The assemblage, which consisted of about 2,000 workmen and students, adopted a resolution duly cabled to Minister Trotsky. The resolution concluded with the sentiment:

"We send greetings and congratulations for the wonderful work you are doing for the new industrial movement and pledge hearty approval of your aims and pledge ourselves to the spread of the spirit of the Bolsheviks in America."

It was signed "Yours for the international revolution."

Bolshevism, as interpreted by Menshoy and other Trotsky adherents and as



THE HOUSE AT 1491 VYSE AVE., THE BRONX, WHERE TROTSKY MADE HIS HOME IN THIS CITY.

understood by groups that foregather at the Rand School, is the expression of such an understanding among peoples of various nationalities that they will not fight at the behest of autoeracy. This is the doctrine which is being advanced in Russia and bears the name of the radical wing of the Russian Socialists who are trying to make it a guide in the darkness and the storm which besets their country.

The hope of the Bolsheviks of Russia and of the theories of Trotsky are founded upon the possibility that the industrial classes of Germany and Austria will rise against Junkerdom, overthrow the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs and conclude a satisfactory peace not only with Russia but with the Allies. This is the view of the vexed problems of Europe which is taken by the Bolsheviks in Russia and by many thousands of the followers of Trotsky on the east side of this city.

Moderate Socialists Opposed.

To many of the beliefs which are expounded by Trotsky in his pamphlets and summed up in his recent book, "The Bolsheviks and World Peace," moderate Socialists of the Morris Hillquit type take exception. Trotsky carries the theories of Marx and Lassalle to the limit. He is a zealot who makes no compromises. Although he is nominally at the head of the Bolsheviks, his friends here believe that there are many high handed things done by the organization which he would stop if he could.

The attitude of the Bolsheviks toward the new Republic of Finland reflects the tenets of Trotsky and the extremists of his type in a marked degree. The Finns were deprived of all weapons ten years ago by imperial ukase. The Bolsheviks, believing that a faction of the old regime of the Czar is in control in Finland, feel themselves justified in committing acts which are regarded as oppressive by many of the Finns.

Dr. Henry Moskowitz, in an article printed in a recent number of the *Outlook*, refers to the internationalism of Trotsky as based on the socialistic theory that the great war represents the collapse caused by the selfish rivalry of States for the markets of the world. Trotsky taught in season and out of season when he was in this city that the internationalism or the brotherhood of man which would make war impossible could only be obtained by a revolt of the masses.

The followers of Trotsky in this city explain the fact that their apostle was often mistaken for a pro-German propagandist by pointing to his belief that the soldiers of the Kaiser could be induced to revolt by conversion to the creed of that internationalism which is now cloaked under its Russian title, Bolshevism.

Although he was often in conference in New York with Socialists of the German group it was with the idea of bringing them in accord with his broad views of universal brotherhood.

The Bolshevik brand of internationalism reflects everywhere the intolerant and quixotic nature of Trotsky himself. It ignores all matters of racial prejudice and historical backgrounds. Trotsky, the cosmopolite, made to wander all over the world and seeking shelter only for a time in New York, never took into account that even the German Socialists of the advanced type were thoroughly under the control of Potsdam.

How German Socialists Failed.

In his book he writes with feeling of the collapse of "The Second International," as he describes the effort which was made by the German and the French Socialists to prevent the war when the dark clouds were gathering in the international sky. The German Socialists, however, did not then offer to lay down their lives rather than flight, but with customary Teutonic discipline marched to the front in their new uniforms of smoky gray.

Dr. Moskowitz recalls a remark which he heard Prof. Gustav Schmoller of Berlin University make fourteen years ago to the effect that a German Chancellor had told him that the existence of the Social Democratic party was fortunate for the monarchical state because it provided a disciplined proletariat. These same disciplined Socialists who took up arms against their brother Socialists of other lands are the ones whom Trotsky the dreamer expected to help Russia end the world war.

Even those who knew Trotsky well in this country admit that he had a narrowness of view which did not permit him to sense the genius of American institutions. In his blind hatred of the capitalistic class he failed to realize that Americans of all social strata were doing the best they could to uphold the ideals of democracy.

Trained as a Crusader.

He was a trained pamphleteer and crusader rather than a journalist, despite the fact that he had had an experience of twenty years with various publications abroad. He did not make any great effort to learn English while he was here, and he spoke with disdain of American newspaper men who met him in his favorite haunts because they could not discuss intricate questions of political economy with him in German or French.

He did have at his command enough English to understand what any American might have to say on the subject of internationalism. One of the intimates of Trotsky recalls vividly sitting with him on the platform of Cooper Union at a mass meeting while Eugene V. Debs was addressing a typical East Side assemblage.

The word "internationalism" came from the lips of the speaker. Instantly the mobile face of Trotsky was aglow. He leaned forward in his chair and his lips moved slowly as in a stage whisper he laboriously translated into Russian what the orator was saying. Later he made an address on the subject in Russian, quoting with astonishing accuracy the views of Debs and adding his own arguments.

Known for Hate of the Rich.

Some of those who knew Trotsky while he was in New York are wondering how many of the high handed acts of the Bolsheviks are due to the theories of their brilliant, although often intolerant, leader. Even among Socialists he was known for his extreme prejudices against his fellow men who might have any of this world's goods.

In justice to Trotsky and his ideals, however, even Socialists who are not thoroughly in sympathy with all his views maintain that he should not be confused with anarchistic agitators in Russia who have the hardihood to demand of an American Ambassador that he give surety under pain of personal injury for the safety of Alexander Berkman of the black flag.

The appointment in this city of a Consul-General of the Bolsheviks and the efforts of that Government of the Red Wing to have itself formally recognized will raise many interesting questions in the United States. Whatever may betide along these lines, those of this city who are Bolsheviks in spirit and many who are not will watch eagerly for the developments which may come to Russia from the influence of a man who labor-d here on the East Side and dwelt only a few months ago in a tenement of The Bronx.