

Natalia Trotsky's 1956 broadcast to Russia

ON the eve of the Second World War, on 25 August 1939, Hitler and the French ambassador to Germany, Coulondre, try to frighten each other; Coulondre says to Hitler: "The real victor [in case of war] will be Trotsky. Have you thought that over?"

"I know," Hitler replies, "but why did France and Britain give Poland complete freedom of action [to reject German demands]?"

By the end of his life, the name of Trotsky had thus become another word for the proletarian revolution. Trotsky personified socialism: the past of socialism, whose greatest achievement, the Russian Revolution of October 1917, he, together with Lenin, had led; the socialist present — fighting indomitably against overwhelming odds; and the hopes and aspirations for a socialist future. Trotsky's voice was silenced by an assassin on 20 August 1940.

Trotsky's political legacy was continued, among others, by his companion of 38 years, Natalia Sedova (who lived until 1962). After Stalin's successor, Khrushchev, denounced Stalin as a mass murderer, Natalia broadcast this speech into Stalinist Russia in June 1956. It is as if the voice of Trotsky himself, though 16 years dead, was trying for the last time to reach the workers of the USSR, and those aroused in Poland and Hungary.

THIS is Natalia Ivanovna Sedova, widow of Leon Davidovich Trotsky, speaking from Mexico City. I am addressing myself to the workers and peasants and, in the first place to the young people in Soviet Russia.

The present rulers, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoyan and others, having inherited the Stalinist dictatorship, are conducting an intensive propaganda campaign [denouncing Stalin] so as to distract from themselves the powerful wave of dissatisfaction and hatred for the thieves of the victories of the proletarian revolution, a wave which grew in your hearts.

They are the same men who supported Stalin in all his bloody massacres, the aim of which was to frighten you with terror and thus to retain power in the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Just try and think: Who are these direct heirs of the unbalanced Stalin who declared themselves collective leaders of Soviet Russia? They admit, they admit to the entire world, that for many decades not one among them, among the collective leaders, dared — for fear for his own life — to come out with a proposal for steps which would have saved the lives of millions of workers and peasants who were



banished to concentration camps.

I realise with bitterness that many of my listeners were brought up completely in a Stalinist spirit. Young people were taught history which was thoroughly permeated with lies.

Will [they now] tell of the beautiful friendship with Hitler and Ribbentrop which culminated in Stalin's signing of the Hitler pact and which gave a green light to a world war?

The government leaders are in a dilemma. Where should they stop? They have already begun to put the brakes on further unmasking of lies.

The reason for this is clear: their own power is based on this truly monstrous tissue of lies — of lies of the bureaucracy against Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and hundreds of other members of the Opposition. They dare not continue repeating the lies nor denounce them.

Here they try to divide the Stalinist period into two periods: the first period during which they enthusiastically elevated Stalin to the dictator's throne, and the second period when Stalin elevated himself to the status of a deity and thrust on his followers the "cult of personality".

No, the crimes began not from the moment the leader became mentally unbalanced. The so-called "cult of personality" was a natural consequence of the entire period after the death of Lenin and the banishment of Trotsky.

Everything you were taught about Trotsky since that time is vile slander. Those who participated in the revolution and went through its first heroic stages could not believe those lies. But serious changes in the balance of social power will be required before you, young people, will be able to uncover historical truth.

In his testament, Lenin warned the party as follows: "I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man... more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc." These lines were written on the 25th of December 1922. Further, on the 4th of January 1923, Lenin condemned Stalin's position on the Geor-

gian problem and entrusted Trotsky with launching a fight against it. And in a third document Lenin declared that he breaks off all personal and comradely relations with Stalin. While Lenin was still alive, Stalin concentrated in his hands tremendous power by placing his men in important posts. Lenin's testament was not carried out and its publication was forbidden.

Leon Davidovich (Trotsky) understood that by continuing the exposure of the counter-revolutionary regime he was undoubtedly risking his own life. Yet this consideration did not prevent him from merciless criticism (of the regime). Day after day, until the last hour of his life, he continued to appeal to revolutionary workers of the world to rise against these oppressors.

The plan for the industrialisation of the country was worked out by Trotsky. However, at that time Stalin and his clique put their stakes on the peasants and fought this plan. Only after Trotsky was exiled to Alma-Ata and after the opposition was suppressed was Stalin forced to begin the industrialisation of the country. He did it in his own manner with unheard-of cruelty and at the cost of tremendous sacrifices on the part of the population.

Trotsky sharply condemned this method, as well as the forced collectivisation of the peasants, which was accomplished by savage repression, mass deportations and arrests and which resulted in the general famine in the Ukraine during which millions of peasants died. Trotsky also fought against the system of slave labour in the concentration camps.

Russia's present rulers look into the future with some confidence. They know that during the reign of the Leader [Stalin] all the heroic figures of the proletarian revolution were done away with. They believe that nowhere in the world are there any forces that might threaten them.

But they are wrong. Even a weak blow to the myth which they themselves created, even a partial unmaking of the falsehood of the regime on which their rule is based, cannot but sow doubts and discord among the new growing generation.

In the end no admissions and promises can save the decayed Stalinist oligarchy. The task of overthrowing Stalinism is the task of the Russian workers and peasants. I send you my greetings and fiery confidence in your victory.

[The full text of Natalia's speech will be found in *Socialist Organiser* No.611]