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[Faint, mirrored text from the reverse side of the page, including the title 'Natalia Sedova Trotsky' and the publisher's name 'Pluto Press'.]

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Natalia Trotsky

and the

Fourth International

Publisher's note

The documents in this small pamphlet are (with the exception of the 'Natalia Breaks with the Fourth International' by Natalia herself, which has already been widely circulated in the collection 'The Fourth International, Stalinism and the International Socialists', Pluto Press £1.00) published here in English for the first time. They have been translated by Ann Tondovski from 'Les Enfants du Prophete' by J Roussel (Spartacus 10F).

Introduction

254

It is just over ten years since Natalia Sedova Trotsky died. Her whole adult life was inextricably involved with the international socialist revolutionary movement. With Trotsky in his first exile, through the brave, exhilarating days of the Russian Revolution, the years of opposition to the Stalinist degeneration and the long years of the second exile. A whole epoch of the revolution, its rise and decline.

One after the other, her children died, driven to suicide or murdered by Stalin's oppressive terror. In the final horror, the GPU thug Jacson Mornard battered Trotsky to death with an ice axe just a few yards distant from Natalia.

For over twenty years Natalia lived on after this latest crushing loss, with memories so hard to bear it is difficult to conceive of a more devastating personal bereavement.

Yet we have it, on unimpeachable evidence (not least, the testimony of her own writing) that, despite her misery and loneliness, she remained until her death a communist and a revolutionary. This was not a simple question of sticking to the familiar guidelines laid down by habit. If this were so, who would have had better reason than she to remain loyal to the letter of L. D. Trotsky? Her break with the degenerate post-war Fourth International indicates that, to the contrary, she remained loyal to the spirit of Trotsky, the spirit of Marxism and the working class.

Both before and after her death one of the scandals in the movement was the manner in which Natalia was blackguarded by Trotsky's latter day epigones. Her break with the Fourth and her position on Russia, it was suggested, derived from senility and her subjectiveness in the face of Stalinist barbarity. She was never, it was suggested, a person of independent political judgement, merely an echo of Trotsky during his life and a hysteric after his death.

This leaves out of account the great lengths to which both the Socialist Workers Party and the International went to enlist her authority in their internal squabbles before the '52 break, and to 'rehabilitate' her afterwards.

In truth, it must be said, Natalia was not the equal of Krupskaya. She was, however, a political intelligence in her own right, as any halfway impartial observer will concede after reading the two short documents in this collection.

It is not at all necessary to agree with the ultra-left criticism of Grandizo Munis on the Minneapolis Defense Strategy, to be disgusted by the mean minded pusillanimous document of the Pablo/Mandel/Frank reply to her letter breaking with the Fourth. The accusation of capitulation to American imperialism, the slander of betrayal of the workers' struggle, is in no way mitigated by the crocodile tears shed by the Pablo/Mandel/

Today like yesterday

Frank axis at the breaking point. The so-called 'continuators of Trotsky', who have hawked their support (albeit 'critical') at different times for: the national bourgeoisie in occupied Europe, elements in Stalin's own bureaucracy, through Tito, to Mao, Ben Bella and Castro (in the case of Pablo, he has finally accepted the logic of post-war Fourth International Trotskyism and denied the validity, historically and politically, of revolutionary intervention)—that these people can point the finger of betrayal at Natalia would be comic if it were not obscene.

The spirit of internationalism, the substance of communist politics, is not in the imposition of outmoded formulae, nor is it in the quest for the short cut, the gimmick that will replace the working class as the agency of revolutionary change. The profound cynicism and pessimism encapsulated in the post-war theories of Pablo/Mandel/Frank are not an accident of their personalities. They are, in fact, a reflection of the years of defeat, of Stalinist and capitalist reaction, of loss of faith in the working class.

Natalia never lost that faith, her insight into the real essence of communist politics, enabled her to see more clearly than the theoreticians of the Fourth, the class nature of the Stalinist states and the immensity of the task that faced Marxist revolutionaries. Her life and her few published documents give the lie not only to the slanders of her traducers, but also indicate the basic course for Marxists in this and the coming period.

Jim Higgins 1972

As the Fourth International have taken charge of Natalia Sedova Trotsky's funeral without even taking the trouble of enlightening anybody on her real political thought, we take it as our duty to make available the three following documents.

We should mention the fact that in her letter of resignation, Natalia accuses the Fourth International not only of conservatism towards an outdated notion (Russia: Workers State) but also of their abandoning proletarian internationalism. In its answer the Fourth International leaves aside the political accusations and hesitates on the Russian question. Its strongest argument is insult. It accuses Natalia Sedova Trotsky of being under the influence of American imperialism, whilst during the last world war as the current leaders of the Fourth International were taking part in the National Resistance, she was accusing them of opportunism.

Did the Fourth International organise the funeral of a woman fallen under the influence of American imperialism or did they 'rehabilitate' her in the eastern fashion?

In any case you cannot draw the conclusion that Natalia Sedova Trotsky had changed her position, as is proven by her last written political statement.

It is more and more certain that the Fourth International is tending towards Moscow while Natalia is distancing herself from it, as we are, who remain faithful to revolutionary thought.

Paris 17 February 1962

Editors: Groupe Spartacus (France)

Partita Comunista Internationalista (Italy)

Fomento obrero revolucionario (Spain)

Natalia Trotsky breaks with the Fourth International

Natalia's first disagreement with the Fourth International was on the subject of internationalism and dates from 1941. The American party (the Socialist Workers Party) who were a majority during the war on the International Executive Committee, tended towards a position which deviated significantly from the principle 'Turn the imperialist war into a civil war'.

At the time when the USA were entering the war, the SWP published an ambiguous statement on the subject, meanwhile abstaining from organising any demonstrations against the war not even a meeting. Not long after, 21 of its leaders were arrested by the government. Their reaction to the attack was very weak. They presented themselves as mild left wing critics of the war. During the trial itself the differences were to deepen to the extent of becoming irreconcilable. They were accused, in fact, of being internationalists, of opposing the effort the government was putting into the war and of wanting to transform the imperialist war into a civil war. They denied it strongly, to the extent that they contradicted or denied their own words, expressed during peace time, as well as Lenin's and Trotsky's texts on the imperialist war.

The SWP never published, and for a very obvious reason, the full report of the proceedings of the trial, which took place in Minneapolis. But it is enough to glance through expurgated versions, given in their paper 'the Militant' and in pamphlets, to realise to what extent they were lowering themselves. They didn't accuse the government of waging a vicious war against a no less vicious enemy, but only of being incapable of winning a victory against the Germans. The SWP, on the contrary, had ready the necessary programme to achieve this goal, which in fact was common to both the SWP and the government in Washington.

In Mexico Natalia was upset and indignant about these statements. She was not alone in this. The exiled Spanish Group of the Fourth International severely criticised the SWP's policy. Natalia gave her approval to this criticism and without hesitation her agreement. Modesty prevented her from intervening in the polemic beyond a few letters and oral discussion: 'I didn't do it while Trotsky was alive—she said—I will not do it now, but I will take a position.' Therefore her support to the Spanish group, and to me personally, was so energetic that the SWP after having tried in vain to turn her away from us, started snide attacks on her. They gave as an explanation of Natalia's attitude, that it was not the defence of the internationalists but the intellectual downfall of an aged woman, a condition that put her under my pernicious influence.

From London, the current secretary of the Fourth International and 'theoretician' of the 'Ligue Communiste' Pierre Frank, expressed his agreement with the political platitudes of the SWP and therefore of the majority of the International Executive Committee. He was collaborat-

ing at that time with the English section, the Revolutionary Communist Party, which was copying the opportunism of the American section. The disagreements were in fact to widen during the course of the war. Like the Americans, the French and the English Parties on the whole joined the machinery of national defence through the Resistance movement, its only possible manifestation under the occupation. Natalia and the Spanish group had hopes of rectifying the situation in the Fourth International with the help of the French Party. We found out after the defeat of Germany to what extent they too were bogged down by opportunism. These three parties, loudly supported by Singhalese nationalists, 'supposed Trotskyists' (the same 'Trotskyists' who are now respectable ministers in the capitalist government of Colombo) were to convert the Fourth International to a contemptible left Stalinist position. This at a time when the state capitalist nature of the Moscow regime became ever more clear.

The Fourth International had renounced the very idea of internationalism. They had discarded this supreme principle of the revolutionary, they promoted to the rank of principle the defence of the Stalinist regime and its interests in the world. They got to the stage of defining themselves as 'the Party of the International Communist Movement' (read Stalinist).

Our approach was exactly the opposite. The theoretical and practical conditions for internationalism forced us firstly to realise the incompatibility of these principles with the defence of Russia, and secondly to re-examine the nature of the so-called 'soviet economy' and to discover that it was State Capitalism controlled by a despotism well in harmony with the extreme centralisation of capital. Natalia followed our research and always expressed her agreement with our conclusions.

Frank and Co. refused to even take into account what Trotsky had written not long before he was murdered on the necessity to revise his own analysis of the nature of Russia and the question of unconditional support, if stalinism wasn't destroyed by the Revolution during the war or immediately after.

In 1948 at the first congress after the war which endorsed the abandonment of internationalism, and from then on, the Spanish section broke with the Fourth International without asking Natalia to follow them.

Later she too was unable to put up with the pro-Russian reaction, of these deserters from Internationalism, to the Korean war, as is witnessed in her resignation letter. The spiteful reply from the Fourth International for which Pierre Frank and Monsieur the economist Mandel are responsible as much as the future semi-minister of the Algerian government Pablo Raptis, was written in a spirit of petty vengeance. The starting point for the disagreement, and the basis of the others, was that during

Natalia Trotsky's document

the war, the authors of the reply [Frank, Mandel, Pablo - JH] were under the influence of American imperialism—amongst other things—worse still that they gave assistance to the national defence during the resistance stage of the war.

Despite their reply, Frank and Co. did their best, right up to her death, to win back Natalia, if not directly through her political agreement at least indirectly by disingenuous coaxing. She remained firmly outside the Fourth International. The manoeuvres to exploit her name did not even stop at her final illness.

The day before her admission into hospital, not long before her death, she agreed to an interview, proposed by Frank, with a well-meaning journalist Michel Gordey (France Soir), a friend of the 'socialist countries' it goes without saying. What Frank did not know, is that Natalia insisted over and over again that I should be present at the interview. Unfortunately this was impossible. I suggested to her that the date should be changed, but this also turned out to be impossible for reasons I have never been able to discover. The interview in which Gordey mixed his own words—or those of a third party—to Natalia's, he made her appear to say what Frank actually thought i.e. 'Trotsky, spiritual father of Mao Tse Tung', 'hopes of rehabilitation', etc. In the event this was a mistake, because it allowed the publication of a correction which we reproduce elsewhere, which puts things very clearly. This was the last written statement of Natalia's. France-Soir published it in its entirety in one of its editions, but abbreviated in the others.

Natalia's death, the date of which I do not know exactly (because for different reasons I was not allowed to see her, which, when she discovered it, was to be a source of anger to her; unfortunately, in the last days of her life she didn't have the means to fight against the constraints imposed on her) occurred at a doctor's house, a personal friend of Frank's. This gave Frank the opportunity to stage the funeral of his choice at the Pere Lachaise cemetery. He had Natalia at his disposal, he could 'rehabilitate' her at last. Always equal to himself, he invited speakers from: the leaders of the SWP who had played the dirtiest tricks on Natalia in Mexico, reformists like the Italian Maitan (admitted to the diluted post war trotskyism of the Fourth International) on top of all that Frank himself and Isaac Deutscher, whose stupid vanity Natalia bore with difficulty, also spoke. Amongst the speakers only two people seemed upset about her death: Marguerite Bonnet and Andre Breton.

These were the last days of a revolutionary, a woman with a rare strength of character and shrewdness of mind.

Paris 18th November 1971

G Munis

Executive Committee of the Fourth International
Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party
Comrades:

You know quite well that I have not been in political agreement with you for the past five or six years, since the end of the war and even earlier. The position you have taken on the important events of recent times shows me that, instead of correcting your earlier errors, you are persisting in them and deepening them. On the road you have taken, you have reached a point where it is no longer possible for me to remain silent or to confine myself to private protests. I must now express my opinions publicly.

The step which I feel obliged to take has been a grave and difficult one for me, and I can only regret it sincerely. But ~~there~~ is no other way. After a great deal of reflections and hesitations over a problem which pained me deeply, I find that I must tell you that I see no other way than to say openly that our disagreements make it impossible for me to remain any longer in your ranks.

The reasons for this final action on my part are known to most of you. I repeat them here briefly only for those to whom they are not familiar, touching only on our fundamentally important differences and not on the differences over matters of daily policy which are related to them or which follow from them.

Obsessed by old and outlived formulas, you continue to regard the Stalinist state as a workers' state. I cannot and will not follow you in this.

Virtually every year after the beginning of the fight against the usurping Stalinist bureaucracy, L D Trotsky repeated that the regime was moving to the right, under conditions of a lagging world revolution and the seizure of all political positions in Russia by the bureaucracy. Time and again, he pointed out how the consolidation of Stalinism in Russia led to the worsening of the economic, political and social positions of the working class, and the triumph of a tyrannical and privileged aristocracy. If this trend continues, he said, the revolution will be at an end and the restoration of capitalism will be achieved.

That, unfortunately, is what has happened even if in new and unexpected forms. There is hardly a country in the world where the authentic ideas and bearers of socialism are so barbarously hounded. It should be clear to everyone that the revolution has been completely destroyed by Stalinism. Yet you continue to say that under this unspeakable regime, Russia is still a workers' state or with socialism. They are the worst and the most dangerous enemies of socialism and the working class.

You now hold that the states of Eastern Europe over which Stalinism

established its domination during and after the war, are likewise workers' states. This is equivalent to saying that Stalinism has carried out a revolutionary socialist role. I cannot and will not follow you in this.

After the war and even before it ended, there was a rising revolutionary movement of the masses in these Eastern countries. But it was not these masses that won power and it was not a workers' state that was established by their struggle. It was the Stalinist counter-revolution that won power, reducing these lands to vassals of the Kremlin by strangling the working masses, their revolutionary struggles and their revolutionary aspirations.

By considering that the Stalinist bureaucracy established workers' states in these countries, you assign to it a progressive and even revolutionary role. By propagating this monstrous falsehood to the workers' vanguard, you deny to the Fourth International all the basic reason for existence as the world party of the socialist revolution. In the past, we always considered Stalinism to be a counter-revolutionary force in every sense of the term. You no longer do so. But I continue to do so.

In 1932 and 1933, the Stalinists, in order to justify their shameless capitulation to Hitlerism, declared that it would matter little if the Fascists came to power because socialism would come after and through the rule of Fascism. Only dehumanised brutes without a shred of socialist thought or spirit could have argued this way. Now, notwithstanding the revolutionary aims which animate you, you maintain that the despotic Stalinist reaction which has triumphed in Eastern Europe is one of the roads through which socialism will eventually come. This view marks an irremediable break with the profoundest convictions always held by our movement and which I continue to share.

I find it impossible to follow you in the question of the Tito regime in Yugoslavia. All the sympathy and support of revolutionists and even of all democrats, should go to the Yugoslav people in their determined resistance to the efforts of Moscow to reduce them and their country to vassalage. Every advantage should be taken of the concessions which the Yugoslav regime now finds itself obliged to make to the people. But your entire press is now devoted to an inexcusable idealisation of the Titoist bureaucracy for which no ground exists in the traditions and principles of our movement.

This bureaucracy is only a replica, in a new form, of the old Stalinist bureaucracy. It was trained in the ideas, the politics and morals of the GPU. Its regime differs from Stalin's in no fundamental regard. It is absurd to believe or to teach that the revolutionary leadership of the Yugoslav people will develop out of this bureaucracy or in any way other than in the course of struggle against it.

Most insupportable of all is the position on the war to which you have committed yourselves. The third world war which threatens humanity confronts the revolutionary movement with the most difficult problems, the most complex situations, the gravest decisions. Our position can be taken only after the most earnest and freest discussions. But in the face of all the events of recent years, you continue to advocate, and to pledge the entire movement, to the defense of the Stalinist state. You are even now supporting the armies of Stalinism in the war which is being endured by the anguished Korean people. I cannot and will not follow you in this.

As far back as 1927, Trotsky, in reply to a disloyal question put to him in the Political Bureau by Stalin, stated his views as follows: *For the socialist fatherland, yes! For the Stalinist regime, no!* That was in 1927! Now, twenty-three years later Stalin has left nothing of the Socialist fatherland. It has been replaced by the enslavement and degradation of the people by the Stalinist autocracy. This is the state you propose to defend in the war, which you are already defending in Korea.

I know very well how often you repeat that you are criticising Stalinism and fighting it. But the fact is that your criticism and your fight lost their value and can yield no results because they are determined by and subordinated to your position of defense of the Stalinist state. Whoever defends this regime of barbarous oppression, regardless of the motives, abandons the principles of socialism and internationalism.

In the message sent me from the recent convention of the SWP you write that Trotsky's ideas continue to be your guide. I must tell you that I read these words with great bitterness. As you observe from what I have written above, I do not see his ideas in your politics. I have confidence in these ideas. I remain convinced that the only way out of the present situation is the social revolution, the self-emancipation of the proletariat of the world.

Natalia Sedova TROTSKY
Mexico, DF
May 9, 1951

Statement from EC of the Fourth International

Natalia Trotsky's break with the Fourth International is a sad event in its history, which will be a source of disappointment to revolutionaries of the whole world. But this break with us will not be able to change anything of our determination to carry on the struggle for the ideas of the martyred leader of the October Revolution, a struggle now abandoned by Natalia. They will understand that her action, in spite of her good intentions, is objectively a capitulation under the pressure of worldwide imperialism: but this capitulation itself does not question the programme of the Fourth International any more than did the capitulation to Stalinism of its nearest collaborators, Rakovsky, Radek, Preobrazhensky and others during their existence. Organised reaction has often, through its power, dominated or crushed the resistance of some people. But it has never been able, and we are certain, will never be able to crush the great truths of the marxism elaborated by the brilliant leaders of the proletarian revolution Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and the movements they created.

There is no need at this moment to indulge in a long polemic on Natalia's statement. Facts, history and the logic of class analysis are clear. They are the flesh and blood of the workers with which Trotskyism identifies itself in every country. And it is not a coincidence. It is Trotsky himself who insisted that the strategy of unconditional defence of the soviet union against imperialism should be the basis of the movement he directed in order to supplant and overthrow Stalinism in the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat. It wasn't an academic question for him. From the beginning of his exile in 1929 up to his death, eleven years later, he never once made any concession to those who asked to give up the strategy of the international class struggle. On the contrary, Trotsky broke without hesitation with the most 'distinguished' people and even with his personal collaborators—from Souvarine to Shachtman—who were wrong on this decisive question. This question was the reason for most of the divisions within the ranks of the Trotskyist movement, divisions that turned out to be totally justified by the subsequent history of most of those who started off with a defeatist position towards the Soviet Union.

It is painful to hear Natalia Trotsky repeat the same arguments that Trotsky had fought against for so long and that he refuted and denounced in all his writings, in particular all of the writings of his last battle against the petty-bourgeois opposition, Shachtman-Burnham in the SWP a few months before he was murdered.

Trotsky knew perfectly well the bestiality and the barbarism of the Stalinist regime. He had lived through its horrible degeneration and advanced the necessity of a political revolution to topple the bureau-

cratic regime and re-establish a workers' democracy. But it was Trotsky, the author of the famous parallel between the totalitarian regimes of Stalin and Hitler, who rejected without any doubt any suggestion leading to the fact that the Soviet Union because of its regime should be abandoned to the mercy of imperialism. He never stopped repeating that marxism in its essence consisted in grasping the difference between the social base of the society created by the October Revolution and the parasitic caste which had usurped the power in the first workers' state. Perfectly clear as to the process of degeneration which was taking place Trotsky repeated on several occasions that the class nature of the state was determined by its forms of property and that only the elimination of nationalisation and of a planned economy would modify its class nature; Natalia Trotsky has not brought forward any new arguments to prove that such a transformation had taken place.

On the contrary, her statement doesn't give any serious analysis of Stalinism or of the situation in the Soviet Union. It constitutes one of those emotional reactions to the brutality of the Stalinist regime, that have become so familiar during the past years and weren't unknown in Trotsky's days. Once more we are faced with the old attempt to identify the most consistent revolutionary opposition to the Kremlin with Stalinism, because of their defence of the Soviet Union. It is painful that this accusation is made to us by the widow of he who was so often the subject of the same accusation and for the same reasons. Trotsky's assassination has shown that Stalin was himself not at all convinced that there was in Trotsky's defencism the slightest indication or sign of a capitulation to the autocratic regime in the USSR.

We understand fully the personal reasons for Natalia's bitterness and we know of the great sufferings she underwent at the hands of the Kremlin assassins. But we also have to repeat with Trotsky that bitterness cannot replace politics. Especially in periods of war or imminent warfare, when the pressures of organised society reach their highest intensity, a revolutionary who loses his head, ie, his class criteria, is lost.

For Trotsky in the last war, as for us today, the main enemy of socialism and progress is worldwide imperialism. It's only when this is understood and becomes the basis of our class strategy—and not otherwise—that Stalinism and all the other foreign tendencies in the workers' movement can be fought and defeated.

The harsh repudiation of the Fourth International by Natalia will provoke the opposite reaction to that for which she was looking. It is a precious present that she is giving both to Stalinism and to imperialism. Stalin will be able to spread more easily his lies and slanders against Trotskyism to the workers and peasants of Korea, China, Eastern

Europe and the Soviet Union, whom Natalia has decided to abandon to imperialism because of the influence of the domination of Stalinism in those countries. On the other hand, the lackeys of imperialism the social democrats and the renegades of all natures will try to find in her statement a justification to their crimes and their betrayals of the proletariat. But neither one or the other will succeed in the end. The strength of truth will resist these distortions and attacks. And especially the determination of the revolutionary cadres of the Fourth International to take part in the struggles of the masses against capitalism and imperialism, whatever the temporary setbacks this will lead to the final justification of our martyr leader over all his disparagers of today.

It is not easy to separate with Natalia, who after so many years of struggle has become the victim of pressures stronger than her. The revolutionaries, the continuators of Leon Trotsky have no choice. We can only repeat the famous maxim he liked to quote: 'Neither laugh, or cry, but understand'.

June 1951

Last statement of Natalia Sedova Trotsky

Monsieur le Directeur,

In the interview written by Michel Gordey and published in France-Soir on Monday November 7th, it says in the second paragraph 'She (ie, myself) hopes, before she dies, to witness the rehabilitation by world communism of the one (Trotsky) who was, after Lenin, the greatest revolutionary of the modern times and the spiritual father of Mao Tse-Tung, the Chinese communist leader.'

These were certainly not my words; they were introduced by the author of the interview. I am therefore forced to clarify this by the following:

1 A great revolutionary like Leon Trotsky can in no way be the spiritual father of Mao Tse-Tung, who achieved his position in China in direct struggle with the left opposition (Trotskyist) and consolidated it by the assassination and persecution of revolutionaries, exactly as Chiang Kai-Shek did. The spiritual fathers of Mao and of his party are obviously Stalin (whom he in fact claims as such) and his collaborators, Kruschov included.

2 I consider the present Chinese regime, as well as the Russian regime or any other built on the same model, to be as far away from marxism and from a proletarian revolution as Franco's regime in Spain.

3 The police terror and the slanders of Stalin were only the political aspects of a struggle to the death against the revolution, led by the whole of the bureaucracy. One therefore cannot expect the re-establishment of the truth in any other way than through the annihilation of the bureaucracy by the working class they have reduced to slaves. I do not have hopes for the Russian party nor for its imitators, who are basically anti-communist. Any de-Stalinisation will turn out to be a confidence trick if it does not lead to the seizure of power by the proletariat and the dissolution of the police, political, military and economic institutions, the basis of the counter-revolution, which established the Stalinist state capitalist regime.

Yours faithfully

Natalia Sedova Trotsky

Paris, November 9 1961