

November 24, 1985

Dear Tony:

It would be easy to evade the reason for not publishing your In Memoriam to Wolfe as is by simply noting that it not only missed the deadline, but four and a half pages for such an article as an In Memoriam is altogether too long for our paper.* Actually, however, I'm anxious to see your piece circulated as is, and my answer in the same bulletin, because it raises questions beyond Kronstadt and into the actual subject of my next book, Dialectics and the Party; not that I will have you wait that long, but it will give me a chance to breathe before still another deadline faces me.

However, I do not wish Wolfe's death to remain unacknowledged and therefore I have written a smaller piece in my own name, "stealing" one paragraph from your covering letter, which you did not include in your piece itself, introducing it as: "A friend of Wolfe's wrote me..." (I will see that this issue is sent to you first-class.)

Please bear with me as I lay my troubles upon you. I just came back from the only tour I did accept this year, New York, which was listed formally as three meetings, but which was in fact none. I was going very nearly around the clock with individual meetings in addition to being interviewed on everything from a Caribbean radio program, to Women's Liberation on station WBAI. The latter will appear in January.

The interviewer, Dr. Blanche Cook, is a well-known Women's Liberationist and anti-militarist, writing especially against Reagan and Latin America. She was so interested in all my works that not only did she promise reviews but she ordered Dialectics and the Party; I informed her it would not be ready for another year or longer. She kept asking questions after the time was up for the interview, because the whole question of democracy after the conquest of power was what concerned her and what she insisted held to be the reason so many of both Reaganites and S non-card-carrying Stalinists are debating among themselves.

May I say that it is your profound understanding of this question and in general the question of Ideas (and perhaps a little of the fact that I am 75 and still going strong) that has led you to make the generous contribution for which I thank you very much. The result, however, of that New York trip and the return a few days ago to find that Reagan and Gorbachev had just met and I had to tear out something from the pages at the printer in order to make room for an Editorial on that non-summit and also create room for a short In Memoriam, is that I am feeling dead-tired. But how can I be when staring me in the face are year-end deadlines for the new Introduction for our Frantz Fanon pamphlet, the completion of the 30 year Retrospective of N&L, a syllabus for a new series of classes/workshops, and a year-end sum-up. Otherwise I am free to consider anew Wolfe's conclusion of how Trotsky felt re Kronstadt and how I felt on the same subject when I came to Trotsky and my present position. That will hardly be completed when we do publish your piece, as follows with my brief commentary.

16606

11/12/85

Dear Raya,

Here's more than you asked for!
You may not like it -but it's an accurate and faithful picture of Wolfe's ideas. *
① Since it may clash with your own, I have no objection to your splitting it apart. However, I hope you will see fit to print it as is, and perhaps append your "correction." It certainly skimps any literary critique or human interest, personal reminiscence etc. I thought that the argument about LT & Kronstadt deserved the spotlight. You gave K. only one sentence, as I recall, in your whole oeuvre, and it was counter.

What I omitted as an alternative final para. was:

② Wolfe abstained from politics in his last decades. In his writing, he made clear enough where his sympathies lay: with the rebel spirit. Many of his readers would accept the proposition that to depict truthfully the features of contemporary society is a sufficient argument to replace it.

③ Many others, however, yours,

I felt that to depict Kronstadt as Tony... had that type of smell... really... to... was aff... his... to... to...
P.S. I made the delivery to our mutual friend as promised, for your work.

BW once told me that Joseph Losey (now dead) stole his work for the movie on LT.

*see top of p. 4 - ring a bell?

16607

In Memoriam: Bernard Wolfe

The death of Bernard Wolfe led me to remember the militant student youth I knew in the 1930s. Bernard was an activist at Yale University in 1935, where he expounded revolutionary Trotskyist views of the world. His opposition to Stalin's betrayal of the Russian Revolution became intense as Stalin staged the greatest frame-up in history—the Moscow Trials. In 1937 Bernard went to Mexico, where Leon Trotsky had been granted asylum, to become a secretary and bodyguard to Trotsky.

The Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made Against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials, organized by Professor John Dewey, defended Trotsky against Stalin's slanders. After a year of alternative trials in Mexico they issued an international verdict: Not Guilty. However, during those trials the old question of Kronstadt was raised, and some did not accept Trotsky's stand in putting down the mutiny. Wolfe himself became dissatisfied with Trotsky's analysis. He left Mexico and returned to the U.S. to pursue his literary career.

Of the many novels Bernard Wolfe penned, the one that is best known to this day is *The Great Prince Died*, published in 1959. The main character, Victor Rostov, bore such a striking resemblance to Trotsky that reviewers treated Rostov as Trotsky. Here is how Wolfe himself explained the work: "This work cannot be called history. It is, rather, a fiction based upon, derived from—dogged by, if you will—history."

A friend of Wolfe's wrote to me: "Wolfe abstained from politics in his last decades. In his writing he made clear enough where his sympathies lay: with the rebel spirit. Many of his readers would accept the proposition that to depict truthfully the features of contemporary society is a sufficient argument to replace it."

Although I broke with Trotsky over his position that Russia was still a "workers state though degenerate," and held that it was a state-capitalist society, I felt that to depict Trotsky as if he had a guilt complex about Kronstadt, as Wolfe did in his work, was a way of attributing his own views to Trotsky. I do agree, however, that the rebel spirit of the youthful Bernard Wolfe I knew remained with him in his later years. It is this we commemorate.

—Raya Dunayevskaya