

0 7 2 8  
July 31, 1946

First conversation with Natalia was quite general, ranging from the Russian question to organizational measures of Cannon; she said:

1) IT had always noted the rightward movement in Russia, referring particularly to his article on the 2nd anniversary of the Russian Revolution (originally published in Opposition Bulletin #66-67 and also in the NI in English). Since then there have been six years of war which is equal really to a retrogression of 30 years, and yet, as she wrote to Wright, "You hold on to the formula, defense, not seeing on what the formula was based." "If", she added in that letter to Wright, "you cannot work out a new article, at least reprint the old one with commentaries, pointing to what occurred since it was written." The article was reprinted but no commentaries, "which made it meaningless under the circumstances." When she asked why no comments, they said there are no new data, none complete and she added, "There weren't full data when Lev Davidovich was alive, but one must analyze what there is at hand, no matter how scant."

Here I remarked that data was by no means scant, and pointed to my articles in 1943, the AER, and the latest. She said she first heard of my articles when the Webers came here. "Why had no one told me?" "Why don't they polemicise for or against them in the FI?" Cannon says he has no time or space for constant polemics. How can that be? When we were working illegally in Russia and also abroad and had to send our newspapers into Russia at great risk, nevertheless we always polemicized against all groupings. By polemicising against another's viewpoint, you explain your own. That is the way it always was with the Bolsheviks. That is the way it should be. There are six tendencies in the French party. I am for giving them all equal rights to expression. We must not shut any one up; it is necessary to discuss freely and fully."

2) I stated that Cannon's bureaucratism was not unconnected with an indefensible line on Russia. To insist Russia was still a workers state in face of all the evidence meant of necessity to defend such a line by bureaucratic measures, since one could not do so otherwise. Though she now thinks the conquests of October are gone, and Russia is no longer a workers state, the line as it was left by Trotsky was being defended by Cannon. With a different line, it was possible to have seen capitalism in Russia before 1946. Though my main point is to change the line now, it is necessary to state that Trotsky himself did not see the capitalist laws of development in Russia.

"How was it possible," said Natalia, "for him not to have seen any such fundamental development?" We left it at that point in order to arrange for a more detailed discussion where I could present my views. She said she would be extremely glad to hear them, they should be sent everywhere, and by all means I should try to get to Europe to the World Convention and present them there.

3) She then stated that her relations with Cannon et al were deteriorating, that she was taken to task for defending Weber when he had "falsified" her intervention. She said she does not wish to intervene and perhaps I should take advantage of the interest shown in "Johnsonites" (of whom she had first heard now) by speaking to Cannon directly, as his influence in the Fourth is decisive. Charlie Curtis was now in Mexico and perhaps we'll also see him, though the greater and more "intimate" bulk of conversation should be continued with her and Munis.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the evening I saw Munis and again the conversation was general. He met me by saying he had just (when Weber came here) been addressing a letter to F. Forest who, he was sure, had a mustache, to please bring her data up to date and he would publish such pamphlet in Spanish and French. He himself is having a pamphlet on the Russian question published in which he leans heavily on my data. He is not sure, however, he agreed fully with me on "state capitalism" if I meant by that a class in the "historic sense", one destined for a long life because we are in the death agony of capitalism." He seemed much bothered by the fact that if you call it a class, you do not see early revolutionary perspectives. When I explained I give it no such long lease on life, and gave

him my Part 2 of the Russian article to read, we dropped it for later discussion.

He seems to be so bitter against Russia and Stalinism now that he displays some ultra-leftism, such as being against practically all united fronts with Stalinism and opposed the slogan "SP-CP-CCP TO POWER" in France. "When we originally had the slogan of Socialist-Communist government", he said, "it was not based only or merely, as it now seems to be, on who has the masses. Otherwise, Stalin's slogan, "Hitler first and then we" would have been correct.

The Russian question also had another effect on him, and that is to be against the slogan of "nationalization under workers control." Now that nationalization is proceeding by capitalists, we should not sow illusions by "adding workers control", which in reality only has meaning when the bourgeoisie is expropriated. "Who in Europe is now raising slogans for expropriating the bourgeoisie? Instead, we act opportunistically, as do our British comrades and say merely nationalization without compensation and under workers control. The most important thing is workers power and that's what we have to fight for, anticipating that when the workers start moving, they will move much faster than we think and skip many bridges that we seem to think we must build for them."

He has contacts with many European sections and also with India, they all seem to be for the defense of Russia. Though a member of the IS, he was not even invited to participate in the Conference just held. Cannon, of whom he has the lowest opinion, ran it; but how can you hope the International to help us or him when Cannon, compared to the European sections' attitude toward defense is to the "left of them". He was opposed to the SWP minorities not fighting on a political platform but he understood how unbearable conditions were in the SWP. He had not read our documents yet, had the haziest idea of what "Johnsonites" were like, did not know Johnson held it was "state capitalist" since he had only heard of his appellation of "Fascist state". He was glad I came and we will be able to discuss in detail all positions.

\*\*\*\*\*

Excerpt from letter--August 5, 1946

1) When I spoke to the leader of the Mexican group, Galicia, he did not feel that the Mexicans would come for a special meeting arranged for me, and so asked whether I could address their regular business meeting, and in 40 minutes, speak mainly about unification of SWP and WP. This I did, and in the last 10 minutes touched upon the Russian question, hoping merely to arouse their interest. I succeeded sufficiently well that they arranged to put aside a special meeting for me. At this meeting, which occurred yesterday, and at which I spoke for nearly two hours, there ensued a very lively discussion. The main points that bother them are: (a) how does it happen that Trotsky, one of the greatest Marxists, could have used the wrong methodology? Wasn't it rather great taking for granted that the law of value did function in a workers state, he spent most of his time analyzing the development of the Russian State, stage by stage, rather than make generalizations too hastily. (b) isn't it rather true that the new occurrences which demand a change in line, have taken place since the death of Trotsky? Therefore isn't it possible to change the line of the Fourth, by development rather than by revision of Trotsky's line.

I did succeed in interesting them enough so that they not only wish to study the problem but wish to know all the Johnsonite positions. They will definitely express themselves to the Fourth in favor of rediscussing the Russian Question in open congresses where all tendencies have a chance to be represented.

The Mexicans have, nationally, a group of 50; in Mexico City they are 18; very good proletarian composition, in the city in the typographical and construction unions, and otherwise in the oil fields.

2) Munis and the Spanish group definitely hold the position that Russia is a state capitalist society; he says that the Spanish group in France is leaning to that position, and that no doubt when he gets back

to influence them to accept that position formally. He has also just established contact with the underground in Spain and is looking forward to returning there (Madrid). Meanwhile he is translating the Leontiev article and wishes me to write an introduction. He also feels that if I brought the Russian articles from the MI up to date, they could issue it as a pamphlet both in Spanish and French.

He has also given me some news of the international groupings; he says the very finest is in Greece--fine both theoretically and practically; they control the whole proletarian movement in Salonica and held power in that city briefly. In France we now sell 30,000 copies of La Verite and due to the fact that we get enough paper to publish 100,000 we sell that paper so that the newspaper is self-sustaining. In Italy we are small, but the Bordighist are a big power, having units everywhere including Trieste; they polled 40,000 votes in 4 cities where they ran candidates without much ado.

3) I am now with Natalia in Guernvaca where I shall spend three days with her alone. Though she is much interested in the Russian question and definitely feels it must be rediscussed and re-evaluated, she is worried about the type of article I will write, insisting that what is new of a qualitative nature is since the death of Trotsky; that he always spoke of the capitalist tendencies (she points to some place in ~~Stalin~~ Stalin biography where he speaks of the law of surplus value) and that if one could bring all his writings up to date, it would be possible to have a new line on the basis of the old line.

She does not see how she can intervene in the October Congress of the Cannonites since she had written so much without avail on unity; and though there is a new aspect in finding out about the Johnson tendency of which she knew nothing before I came, she still feels it "would be pretentious to greet the congress in my name." But she will no doubt intervene in the world congress on the Russian question. She is re-reading the Old Man wrote.

4) Munis is quite strongly opposed to the International's line on the SP-CP-CGT to POWER; he feels we cannot do anything to help the Stalinists come to power, and though his optimism in the proletariat's creative ability in making the revolution is a fine contrast to the majority who oppose the slogan, still his remedy is that instead we only have slogans such as "Sliding Scale of Wages" and agitation for Soviets is pretty thin substitute for concrete political activity. He is extremely opposed to the SWP's line during the war and at the Minneapolis trial and has written a whole pamphlet against them and their opportunism. Hence his relations both with the SWP and the International are at breaking point. He has just addressed another communication to the Fourth on the need for a full discussion on the Russian question and full discussion and participation of all tendencies that consider themselves Trotskyites. I saw to it that he included in that letter a special reference to Johnsonites.

He has also finished a book on the Spanish revolution (and since 1930). He is greatly interested in history and some philosophy. I've given him your critique of Hook and he has suggested also we contact Van who is working on dialectics.

5) Charles Cornell (not Curtis as I wrote in my first letter) is here and fully represents all the judicious in the Cannon line against Unity. They sure are taking advantage of the Goldman split in order to completely mobilize their party against Shachtman as a maneuver. In that respect, although both Natalia and the Spanish and Mexican groups know that Cannon does not wish unity, and perhaps Shachtman does wish it, still they feel that Goldman played right into Cannon's hands by splitting ahead of the October convention. Why? asks Natalia and also Munis, did Goldman here promise them to remain and then suddenly left. Charlie, of course has a ready answer (he did not participate in our discussions which were very free) but each one speaks to him separately) that Shachtman, wishing only to create splits, published the Internal Bulletin on Unity Negotiations only to embarrass Goldman and force him to split since it revealed his negotiations with the WP and a line

contrary to the one expounded in the SWP. Be that as it might, Natalia agrees with us, that we should not create further splits and confusion since "Cannon would love to have you as a counterbalance to the minority that just left him."

Excerpt from letter of August 12, 1946

The news to add is that the Peruvian section of the Fourth is for the position of state capitalism and also an open congress of the 4th and will lend its pressure. I am on my way now to see some of the Mexicans in order to make definite the translation of a pamphlet by myself on Russia, which will include the three published articles, the two to be published and a special introduction for ~~the two articles~~ them of the latest developments. Also I have arrangements with Munis to write a special introduction for the Leontiev article which he is translating. All these should be published well in advance of the World Congress and ready in Spanish and perhaps in French for the IS.....

Natalia is considering adding me to the Commission on LT's Archives but I am sure she will not succeed in getting the SWP to accept me. She will forward an official letter to them, protesting their failure to inform her of the Johnsonite tendency and something quite favorable about us. Both politically and personally we spent a very profitable time in Cuervavaca. She and Munis both insist I must go to Europe next year to the Conference whether or not invited.