



Trozkys Diary

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(2002a-e)

This Review Fromm wrote 1958 for the publication of *Trotsky's Diary in Exile - 1935* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1958, 218 pp.), but was only published in: *Science and Society*, Vol. 66 (No. 2, 2002), pp. 271-273. - Numbers in {brackets} indicate the next page in the typoscript.

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The general habit of considering Stalinism and present-day Communism as identical with, or at least as a continuation of revolutionary Marxism has also led to an increasing misunderstanding of the personalities of great revolutionary figures: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Just as their theories are seen as related to those of Stalin and Krushchev, the picture of the „revolutionary fanatic“ is applied to them as if it is applied to the vengeful killer Stalin, and to the opportunistic conservative Krushchev. This distortion is a real less for the present and the future. In whatever way one may disagree with Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, there can be no doubt that as persons they represent a flowering of Western humanity. They were men with an uncompromising sense of truth, penetrating to the very essence of reality, and never taken in by the deceptive surface; of an unquenchable courage and integrity; of deep concern and devotion to man and his future; unselfish and with little vanity or lust for power. They were always stimulating, always alive, always themselves, and whatever they touched became alive. They represented the Western tradition in its best features, its faith in season and in the progress of man. Their errors and mistakes are the very ones which also follow from Western thinking; rationalism and the Western over-estimation of the efficacy of force, which underlies the great middle-class revolutions of the last for centuries. {02}

It is not accidental that we know little of the personal lives of these men. They did not take themselves as important; they did not write about themselves, nor speculate about their motivations. In view of the fact that personal data on any of the great revolutionary leaders are very scarce, (we have Lenin's, and Marx' and Engel's letters and--in German--a collection of personal memories about Marx) the Harvard University Press has rendered a singular service with the publication of Trotsky's Diary from the year 1935, covering the time of the last months of his stay in France and of his arrival in Norway.

No doubt Trotsky as an individual was as different from Marx, Engels and Lenin as they were among themselves; and yet in being permitted to have an intimate glimpse of the personal life of Trotsky, one is struck by all that he has in common with these pro-



ductive personalities. Whether he writes about political events, or Emma Goldman's autobiography, or Wallace's detective stories, his reaction goes to the roots, is penetrating, alive and productive. Whether he writes about his barber, the French police officials or Mr. Spaak, his judgment is profound and to the point. When he has a chance to get a visa from the newly formed Norwegian Labor Government, which would be a most fortunate salvation from an ever increasingly difficult exile in France, he does not hesitate for a minute to write a sharp criticism of the Norwegian Labor Party. In the midst of insecure exile, illness, cruel Stalinist persecution of his family, there is never a note of self-pity or even despair. There is objectivity and courage and humility. {03} This is a modest man; proud of his cause, proud of the truth he discovers, but not vain or self-centered. The words of admiration and concern in which he expresses himself about his wife are deeply moving. Just as was the case with Marx, here was the concern, understanding and sharing of a deeply loving man which shines through Trotzky's diary. He loved life and its beauty. One version of his testament he ends with the following words: „I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and vileness, and enjoy it to the full.“

The gratitude we owe to the Harvard Press for rescuing the picture of Trotzky for the present and for future generations does not, however, prevent me from expressing shock and dismay at the fact that the Harvard University Press advertised the book recently saying: „If (the diary) reveals the anguish and loneliness of his exile, often lays *bare his underlying fanaticism and selfishness*, and offers positive, historically important commentary on both local and international politics“. (My italics, E. F.) Quite aside from the fact that it is most unusual that a publisher would criticize his own author by derogatory remarks in his advertising copy, this procedure is unforgivable because there is nothing in the diary which „lays bare“ Trotzky's selfishness. The only thing it lays bare is exactly the opposite. I would challenge the copy writer of the Harvard Press advertisement to quote even a single sentence from the diary which would indicate {04}

Trotzky's „selfishness“. He probably fell for the popularly shared misunderstanding of such persons as Marx and Trotzky. If a man who sees the essence of social and individual reality says what he sees, without sham and equivocation, he is taken to be egocentric, aggressive and vain. If he has unshakable convictions, he is called a fanatic, quite regardless of whether these convictions are acquired by intense experience and thought, or whether they are irrational ideas with a paranoid tinge. If it is to be hoped that the statement will be omitted from further announcements.