

Socialist opponent of Stalinism dies in New York

Helen Halyard
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Nadezhda A. Joffe, a member of Leon Trotsky's Left Opposition, survivor of Stalin's labor camps and author of the extraordinary memoir *Back in Time: My Life, My Fate, My Epoch*, died March 18 at a Brooklyn hospital. Nadezhda first suffered a stroke on February 9. While hospitalized she had two additional strokes and died after falling into a coma for the past week. She was 92 years old.

Nadezhda A. Joffe was the daughter of Adolf Abramovich Joffe, a leader of the 1917 October Revolution. He served under Leon Trotsky's leadership on the Military-Revolutionary Committee that overthrew the bourgeois Provisional Government and established the Soviet state. Following the revolution, he was one of its most outstanding international diplomats and formed part of the delegation for peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk. Joffe's diplomatic activity carried him to Germany, China and Japan. Along with Trotsky, he was an early opponent of the newly emerging Stalinist bureaucracy in the 1920s. Severely ill and prevented by the Stalin faction from seeking treatment abroad, he committed suicide in November 1927 to protest Trotsky's expulsion from the Communist Party.

A committed socialist, Nadezhda Joffe became a member of the Left Opposition soon after its founding in 1923. Her remarkable memoir *Back in Time* provides a vivid account of Soviet life during the 1920s and explains why many, like herself, sought to defend its principles. Evoking the sentiments of an entire generation during that period, Nadezhda remarked, "We wanted nothing for ourselves, we all wanted just one thing: the world revolution and happiness for all. And if it were necessary to give up our lives to achieve this, then we would have done so without hesitating."

The heart of Joffe's memoirs concerns the

nightmarish years of the late 1930s, during which Stalin oversaw the physical extermination of socialist intellectuals and workers in the USSR. Nadezhda was first arrested and deported for several years as an Oppositionist in 1929. A far more brutal period began with her second arrest and deportation to the Kolyma region in Siberia in 1936. Here Left Oppositionists, intellectuals, workers and peasants died by the hundreds of thousands in conditions of back-breaking labor and deprivation. Nadezhda Joffe's first husband and political collaborator, Pavel Kossakovsky, was murdered in Kolyma in 1938.

Nadezhda Joffe's life represents the triumph of principle and human decency over repression by the Stalinist terror machine. Nadezhda celebrated her ninetieth birthday with family and friends at a gathering in Brooklyn in 1996. Among those present were her four daughters, Natasha, Kira, Lera and Larisa. The two youngest, Lera and Larisa, were born in the Kolyma labor camps of northeastern Siberia, while the oldest two saw their mother taken away by the Stalinist police. All paid tribute to their mother's love, and her strength and determination, which reunited the family against incredible odds.

Nadezhda Joffe's historically significant and unique memoir leaves its readers with the following afterword: "I returned to Moscow after rehabilitation in the fall of 1956, and wrote this book in 1971-1972, when the euphoria from the 'Krushchev thaw' had still not fully subsided, when we still heard such words as socialism, the revolution, the party....

"I was personally acquainted with many participants in the October Revolution. Among them were people who renounced a calm, comfortable or prosperous life because they fervently believed in a radiant future for all mankind.

"Many of those whom Stalin considered to be the Opposition paid with years of exile, prison and camps for fighting him, and for understanding that the socialism which had been built in the Soviet Union was not the same socialism about which the best minds of mankind had dreamed."



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