

DOROTHY ROBINSON

Goose Down and a Golden Egg to Go, 2017
Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

CHUCK ROSENTHAL

La Guerra de las Flores

An excerpt from
the novel-in-progress
Trotsky in Mexico

In the next two weeks workers arrived to board up windows that faced a house across the way. Rivera had the wall surrounding Casa Azul raised and reinforced. He placed some young American volunteers, Trotskyists, to guard the gate and two more armed guards, these being Mexican, at the house's entryway. Kahlo came by only once, with Tina, for a cooking fest and Mexican speech lessons. Once again, Eulalia did much of the work, but she laughed and joked with Frida and Tina, and Sedova, too.

"The great man should go shoot us something to roast," said Tina.

Frida had found whiskey and passed the bottle with a wink at Lev, but then twirled, passed, and winked at Natalia and Tina, too. Eulalia said, no, she was working, they were playing.

By the end of the second week, Trotsky mulled abandoning his biography of Lenin for a biography of Stalin, enraged by the most recent trial in Moscow where thirteen of Trotsky's original Bolshevik allies, men who were at his side in the failed revolution of 1905 and the successful one in 1917, confessed to plotting with Trotsky to assassinate Stalin. Again, Trotsky and his son Lyova were convicted in absentia, this time of plotting with Hirohito and Hitler to overthrow Stalin and the Soviet Union. Two of his oldest original, if at times embattling, associates, Bukharin and Rykov, had been arrested and accused of training anti-Stalin terrorists.

A letter from Lyova arrived, full of despair. He confirmed that his brother, Sergei, and his wife had been arrested in Moscow. Sergei, convicted of poisoning his fellow workers, was sent to a Siberian work camp. There was no trace of his wife. "Father, it's pointless to continue," Lyova wrote.

Trotsky wrote back. "Continue or not, you'll be hunted down anyway. So fight! Send me the documents of the trials."

Sedova calmed him. "Sergei is alive," she said.

She obtained from Frida the location of a country home, owned by a friend, in a village nearby, Taxco, where they could walk; Leon could ride horses, hunt, and fish.

She said, "Even in Petrograd, in Moscow, you escaped to hunt and fish, to find the quiet."

"Yes," he said, but while she was making the arrangements, he took one of the guards and purchased a pistol and rounds.