

# The Shooting of Blumkin

## STALIN'S STORY IN PROCESS OF PREPARATION

The protests and indignation of Communists and the masses of workers over the murder of Blumkin at the behest of Stalin will not down, despite evasions, lies and slanders by the Stalinist apparatus-men everywhere. Finally, after a period of silence, as we foresaw, the official Communist press found itself compelled to speak. The *Daily Worker* and the *Communist* in the United States became literally hysterical in their attempts to evade the issue of the murder of Bolsheviks by the Stalinist regime. Now the official Communist press in other countries also finds it necessary to "answer" to the questions and demands of the Communist Opposition. The conspiracy of silence is being broken.

Among those who have entered the lists in an endeavor to cover or lie about Stalin's dastardly act is the *Rote Fahne* of Vienna, which engages in controversy with the social-democratic press concerning Blumkin. It goes without saying that the social democracy could not let slip so exceptional an opportunity for refurbishing somewhat its tarnished reputation. The international party of Noske which is responsible for the death of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg eagerly seizes hold of the assassination of an irreproachable revolutionist by the Stalinists. It is not this side of the affair which interests us at this moment.

Independently of the threats, the intrigues and the slander of the social democracy the question poses itself in this fashion to each revolutionary: Is it true that Stalin had comrade Blumkin shot because he visited Trotsky at Constantinople and attempted to turn over a letter to some fighting comrades in Moscow? If this is true, what must we call him who debauches Communism by such acts? This is the question of importance. One cannot help seeing, for a single instance what a blow such a bloody crime can strike at the revolutionary prestige of the Soviet power—not among the thousands of bourgeois, "or sympathetic intellectuals", or lawyers, or newspaper men, or writers who so nobly visit the fringes of the Soviets for the celebrations and take in its harbors—but among the genuine revolutionary workers. This is why the question of Blumkin must be completely cleared up.

### Running Away from the Facts

What has the *Rote Fahne* to say about the actuality of the facts? It brands the information concerning the murder of Blumkin as "an absolute fabrication which any fool could shatter". This looks like a categorical denial and we would be entirely ready to congratulate ourselves on the firm and categorical tone of the *Rote Fahne*; indeed, the fact in itself appears so horrifying that the first reaction of every revolutionary is to refuse to believe it, to deny it and brand it as slander.

Unfortunately the denial, like the hysteria, slander and evasions of the *Daily Worker* becomes far less categorical further on. And this is not accidental. The *Rote Fahne* has reacted only on the 19th of February, that is, about six weeks after the news had penetrated not only the bourgeois and social democratic press but had been posed as a direct question in the press of the Communist Opposition. Nevertheless, after so categorical an introduction, the *Rote Fahne* imperceptibly replaces this in the following lines with a statement that the falsehood would consist in that Blumkin had been shot "only for having been a Trotskyist, that mythical Blumkin". This stealthy shift of emphasis would look like a journalistic precaution which divests its denial of its whole moral value. The Vienna Stalinist newspaper leaves two doors open: for the categorical denial of the fact itself concerning the murder of Blumkin by Stalin, or for an admission of the fact itself concerning the murder of Blumkin by Stalin, or for an admission of the fact but literally on a day that has not yet been decided upon.

Why has the *Rote Fahne* referred to Blumkin as "mythical", like the *Daily Worker's* "Who is Blumkin?" and what is the meaning of this shamefully cynical shift? Is it because the *Rote*

*Fahne* raises doubts concerning the existence of Blumkin (that is, concerning his past existence)? Is it because the *Rote Fahne* raises doubts about Blumkin having been an irreproachable revolutionist who on many occasions showed an exceptional courage and heroic devotion to the proletariat? Or do its doubts concern only the execution because of Trotsky's letter? This does not follow clearly from the article. This lack of clearness is entirely deliberate. The *Rote Fahne* is simply waiting for the version which Stalin will choose to give as the final one.

### Stalin Prepares His Story

Between times, the latter has long since prepared his version. The rumor has been circulated in several Soviet papers that "Trotskyites" in Siberia have sabotaged the transport of troops against Chiang Kai-Shek, and have derailed locomotives, etc. This is now Stalin's third attempt to connect the Opposition with counter-revolutionists. The first two were knocked to pieces, to their shame; the third will also be knocked to pieces. And if Stalin is still determined to renew his invisible miserable effort, it is only because he needs some story to cover up the assassination of comrade Blumkin.

The *Rote Fahne* ends its article with a panegyric on Stalin as the chosen disciple of Lenin. We know that similar panegyrics in all Parties are now the *sine qua non* conditions for maintaining one's position: of editor, secretary, people's commissar, or of president of the Comintern. But even so we find that the editor of the *Rote Fahne* links up quite imprudently the question of Blumkin with Stalin's character and his relations with Lenin.

It is a fact that Lenin was hostile to the nomination of Stalin as secretary. He expressed his fear that "this cook will serve us a peppery dish". Naturally, in 1921 Lenin could not yet foresee such well-

seasoned dishes as the murder of Blumkin. It is also a fact that in Lenin's Testament to the Party, Lenin pointed out Stalin's disloyalty, his tendency to abuse power, and recommended that Stalin be retired from his important post. Another fact is that immediately after the Testament—March 6th, 1923—Lenin in a letter broke all personal relations with Stalin for his disloyalty and crimes.

### The Dictatorship of Stalin and its Consequences

This was the state of affairs seven years ago, when the position of secretary of the Communist Party had a strictly subordinate importance and when all power rested in the Political Bureau directed by Lenin. Now the situation is radically changed. The domination of the apparatus has become a personal dictatorship of Stalin. The role of the public opinion of the Party is one hundred-times less. Stalin's disloyalty has revealed itself armed with unheard of practices and directed against its own Party. The Blumkin affair uncovers this new position with frightful force.

Yes, the assassination of Blumkin will be utilized by the class enemies and above all by the Socialists. But who is to blame? Those who have engendered this odious affair, that is, the murder of Blumkin. The Stalinists could not have failed to understand what are the consequences of such a crime. They could not have failed to understand that the Opposition would not keep silent. Because to keep silent would mean to unchain the Stalinist bureaucracy and to prepare tens and hundreds of affairs similar to the Blumkin case.

That is why we declare to the official editors, to the secretaries and functionaries—the Fosters, Minors, Bedachts and even the small Browders: "We shall not permit you to evade a reply by covering yourselves with a polemic on the bourgeois journalists and social democrats and popes. We shall compel you to render an accounting before the workers of what has happened. We shall compel you to answer the question: "Do you take the responsibility for the murder of the Bolshevik Blumkin? Yes or No?"

## Mass Unemployment Continues

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burg Cabmen's strike, Aberle Mill strike in Philadelphia, etc) are to be noted the defensive but militant struggles by the rank and file of the workers against the bosses.

In view of the acuteness of the industrial situation generally and mass unemployment particularly and the rising distress and discontent among the masses, bourgeois politicians, and now also the socialists and the A. F. of L. fakers, in New York, have been forced to take note of the situation and to propose "remedies". Theirs is the role of lightning rods to divert the discontent of the masses into harmless (to the bosses and to the reformist and labor fakers) channels. These socialists and fakers have access to and contact with the bosses and governmental agencies, which permit them to gain publicity for their proposals. Without direct pressure from the Left wing and the Communists, they feel free to betray the interests of the workers. The Emergency Conference on Unemployment, representing the Socialists and the A. F. of L. unions in New York has proposed, as one of its "solutions" to unemployment, that the Police Department (!) shall conduct a census as to the number of persons out of work. This is indeed touching, if it were not tragic and disgusting.

### Socialists Propose Unemployment Census by Police

The reformists and labor fakers are willing to turn over the unemployed into the gentle hands of the soft-spoken Whalen. This same Police Department, under Whalen's direction and O. K'd by Mayor James Walker, beats the unemployed, provokes riots at unemployed demonstrations, acknowledges the use of spies among labor organizations and use of the blacklist to deprive workers of their livelihood, is to be "the census-taker of the unemployed! In brief, by the approval of the socialists and labor fakers, the Police Department is to be permitted to bully and spy and lie about

the unemployed situation and then to report to the bosses what they are told to say.

To divert attention from the situation of mass unemployment, the repressive measures against the Left wing and Communists are continued and intensified. In New York parents of children who attended the March 6th unemployment demonstration were sentenced to a day in jail for permitting their children to solidarize with the unemployed. A Young Pioneer has been given the vicious sentence of five years in the reformatory. Communist leaders of the unemployed in New York appear for trial on April 11th on charges of felonious assault and provoking an unlawful assembly on March 6th. A jury trial, which the defendants requested, was not granted. The United States Department of Labor has approved the method of spying, blacklisting and brutality against the workers.

### Repressive Acts Against Workers Don't Solve Unemployment Crisis

But these repressive measures cannot do away with the fact that American capitalism is unable to solve the unemployment problem, and that more and more numbers of workers are beginning to question the "benefits" of capitalist society. The only possible solution of unemployment and capitalism's other ills lies in the struggle for the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by a government of the workers. This is the important lesson that is being taught by the Communists in the unemployed situation. At the same time, the Communists propose as the only workable immediate measures to relieve the acute condition of unemployment: Work or Compensation to be provided for by the bosses and the government; a decrease in working hours to allow for more men to be employed; elimination of the speed-up system that breeds unemployment, etc.

The official Communist Party, unfortunately, still continues a policy that iso-

## SUFFERING AMONG JOBLESS GROWS

WASHINGTON—(FP)—Suffering from unemployment among factory workers in New York state has grown rapidly worse, so that in the past six weeks there has been a 200% increase in the number of families who have been given outdoor relief by organized charities, Miss Frances Perkins, state industrial commissioner, told the Senate committee on commerce, March 21.

The families thus driven to ask aid from organized charity, the commissioner explained, were those normally supported by the wages of their own members. A survey of one-third of the factory workers in the state she said, showed that 9% reduction in jobs had taken place since Oct. 4 last. This would make a total of 135,000 factory workers in this one state join the army of the unemployed since the beginning of October. In the building trades the suffering was even worse, while the "white collar" workers, including the clerical and sales people were likewise suffering acutely. Employment conditions are worse today, she declared, than at any time since 1914.

What makes the general economic situation for the workers more serious, Miss Perkins told the committee, is that those who are employed are by no means all working full time. Hence the totals for the unemployed do not tell the whole story of suffering.

Couzens and Hiram Johnson asked her view of unemployment insurance. The commissioner replied that her staff was engaged in a study of the matter. Government insurance against unemployment, compulsory on the employers, she said, is strongly opposed by many employers "and taxpayers"

John B. Andrews of the American Association for Labor Legislation recited the history of Congress' failure to act on planned unemployment relief since 1914. He testified that unemployment conditions in the region of New York City are the worst since 1914.

lates it more and more from genuine mass contact. It has failed to date to make proposals for a united front of all labor organizations on the issue of unemployment, and thereby plays into the hands of the socialists and labor fakers who are now stepping into the situation with their false and betraying proposals.

The Communist party has substituted a policy of mass meetings and demonstrations, coupled with gross exaggeration and self-praise of its achievements, very much like in the days of Lovestone, for a policy of systematic education and organization of the unemployed, linked with the employed and the organized and unorganized. It is this policy which makes of the March 29th National Unemployment conference in New York only a caricature of what it should and could be. Preparations are indeed "rushed" as the *Daily Worker* reports; but preparations which could have made the gathering a really representative one of delegates from various labor organizations and all sections of labor have not been made. Thereby the March 29th conference dooms itself to a talkfest.

It is still necessary that the Communist Party shall change its course if there is to be a mobilization of the widest possible number of workers and organizations for the relief of the unemployed. We have stated this before and shall continue to do so until the sectarianism of the present party leadership is rooted out and done away with. The opportunity is yet here for a broad united front movement for the unemployed.

The Communist Party is letting golden opportunities slip by to reach and hold large numbers of workers with the Communist message on unemployment and for the cause of Communism, the only true salvation for the working masses. We urge again: for the interests of the unemployed; for the adequate defense of the arrested workers; for the struggle against capitalism; for Communism—the Party must change its course and unite, first of all, all Communist forces as a preliminary basis for a broad struggle against unemployment and capitalism. —M. A.