

Voices of Protest from the Bolsheviks in Exile

(Belated though it is in publication here, the declaration which follows retains all its timeliness and importance. It was addressed as a supplement to the declaration of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition by the group of Oppositionist deportees at Kansk and sent as a protest to the Sixteenth Congress of the C. P. S. U.—Ed.)

Φ

For two and a half years, the vanguard of the Bolshevik party has been submitted to a merciless repression. During this time, all the means of repression have been employed in the struggle against the Opposition: calumny and provocation, raids and arrests, deportations and solitary prison, up to assassination itself. The apparatus, assisted by the G. P. U., with the manifest sympathy of the domestic and international counter-revolution, has deported many hundreds of Bolsheviks to the Siberian taiga, to the steppes of Central Asia, to the damp sections of the Upper-Urals, of Cheliabinsk, of Tomsk and Suzal. Up to the Sixteenth Congress, a special commission for the Opposition has been functioning unknown to the party and the working class. The repression against the Opposition has not taken place without leaving its traces in the country. Since then, espionage, provocation, raids have become frequent and customary phenomena in the workers' quarters, in the university communes, and even in the factories. The arrests and the expulsions of old Bolsheviks, of workers, members of the Party and the Communist Youth, have a painful effect upon the party, demoralize the working class and unleash the bureaucracy. There is the most obvious result of the last two years! For its petty factional interests, the apparatus has surrounded the party with a system of espionage so that a denunciation or a secret agency prevail over the decision of a whole organization of the party.

THE PRISONS FOR OPPOSITIONISTS

The most monstrous and absurd accusations have been flung at the Opposition, and continue to be flung without being supported by any proof. The so-called "ideological" struggle conducted against the Opposition, which never went beyond swindler's maneuvers has now reached an unprecedented persecution. This persecution has become a savage repression which has long ago lost every shred of legality and is now entirely aimed at the liquidation of the Opposition, without even recoiling before the party and the working class, brings to the attention of the Congress: (1) in the old prisons which served under czarism for the imprisonment of revolutionists, the Bolshevik-Leninists are now languishing. At the beginning, they chose as their point of control for the isolation of the Leninist wing of the party the central prison of Tobolsk, but when it overflowed, they added to the system of isolating the Bolsheviks the prison of Upper-Urals which was far from adapted to receiving political prisoners. At present, the Oppositionists in prison are divided in the prisons of every corner of the U. S. S. R. In the single solitary prison of Upper-Urals there are more than 150 men. Many Bolsheviks do their common law term in the Cheliabinsk prison where formerly only the escaped and second offense prisoners had to serve. At the Tomsk station, in the solitary of Viatka, of Suzal and Sverdlovsk, they are also Bolshevik-Leninists. For some time now, finally, Oppositionists have been sent into the central prison of Alexandrovsk, into the Ural solitary, that is, into the prisons that served exclusively for criminals and in which there is no political régime. The terms of imprisonment of all the comrades are arbitrarily fixed, the rule being three years, but in certain isolated cases it ranges from five to six years. In the political solitary the old prison régime prevails which gives the prison administration the monopoly of a limitless autocracy. Cases are known where complaints addressed to the Central Control Commission and to the collegium of the G. P. U. were withheld and not remitted to the addressee, or they were returned with the address of the C. C. C. erased (Urals). Very often the prisons are submitted to the gauntlet (Upper-Urals, Sverdlovsk, etc.), to icy douches (Upper-Urals), to the threat of being shot, which fortunately was not carried out thanks to the revolutionary consciousness of the Red soldiers (Tobolsk). They had medical assistance refused to the badly ill (Tomsk, Uralsk, etc.), suffered imprisonment under conditions which condemned them to physical extermination (for example, at Upper-Uralsk, where the prisoner does not have a space equal to that of a tomb), continual raids applied to the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionists, the White Guards, until the arrival of our comrades in solitary (Suzal).

At the time of the Sixteenth Congress,

dozens of old Bolsheviks lead the terrible life of prisoners, condemning their health, undermined by the illegal work before the revolution and by the civil war, to certain ruin. In the Tomsk prison, subjected to conditions of fatal isolation, lives comrade Sosnovsky, suffering from diabetes at an acute stage. Previously, he was submitted to detention at Cheliabinsk where he was imprisoned for the second time (the first time on the eve of the imperialist war). Comrade Sosnovsky has not the possibility of feeding himself normally (prohibited by the prison administration), and has fallen into the hands of incorrigible gendarmes, void of all feeling of incorrigible gendarmes, the working class. These are Rotchin, chief of the secret section of the G. P. U. at Tomsk and under detention now far more is Greenstein, an old Bolshevik, former member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist party, seriously ill, crushed under the blows of the penitentiary administration. At Viatka, is Kavtaradze. At Suzdal, M. Smirnov, who has already gone through three solitaries and two places of deportation since 1929. B. Elzin, Sapronov and many others are isolated in such a manner that it is not even known in what prison holes they may be.

PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION OF LEFT OPPOSITION

(2) From deportation and imprisonment in solitaries, which have not produced the effect hoped for, the apparatus has passed to more criminal means of repression. For a long time now, a group of Oppositionists lives on the Solovskiy Island in a concentration camp. In flagrant contradiction to the decree of the U. S. S. R. in 1926, interdicting the dispatch of political prisoners to Solovskiy, the G. P. U., even at the end of 1927, incarcerated the Oppositionist Piersk there. In the protest addressed in the name of the colony of deported Oppositionists at Tomsk, the following facts are to be found: "At Solovskiy, a few dozens of our comrades are imprisoned. One of them commenced a prolonged hunger strike in order to demand that the political régime be applied to him. He was thrown into the hole. When he left it, he tried to send a protest to the center, in which he revealed the arbitrary and monstrous régime in solitary. This protest was intercepted. Some time later, this comrade was conducted much further and he has not returned. The official version of the Solovskiy administration was the following: "Killed in an attempt at flight." The acts of physical destruction of the Bolshevik-Leninists are carefully hidden by the G. P. U.: nevertheless, the Opposition has succeeded, back in the spring of 1928, in revealing the circumstances that provoked the death of comrade Butov, who died after a prolonged hunger strike. The death of Butov was a heroic protest against the provocation framed by the G. P. U. with the object of calumniating the Opposition. In November 1928, comrade Haenrichsen, worker in the "Red Triangle" factory, was cruelly beaten to death. The medical certificate notes wounds on the body and the appearance of strangulation.

The Case of Weisman and Bureaucratism

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In the party—a régime which is the inevitable accompaniment of an untenable policy that only a bureaucratic apparatus can enforce because it would not be tolerated under conditions of workers' democracy.

The Weismans make their way to the top because they have one qualification: unquestioning obedience to the higher authorities and readiness to jam any decision down the throats of the workers concerned. They adopt a new decision for "self-criticism" and against "bureaucratism" every six months—cynically and without giving it a second thought, because they know it is only for the record. The workers never consulted by the Stalinist apparatus about the "leaders" that are handed down to them in a new edition every other week. They are told to accept and keep their mouths shut. They are not allowed a single word about this whole procedure, not to speak of having any control over their officials. And the Weismans know that they are under no control from below. It is precisely this condition—the essence of bureaucratism—which gives the Weismans the opportunity to conduct themselves as they do. And there will be no Weismans only when the workers destroy the roots from which these foul blossoms of Stalinism flourish and poison the atmosphere of the movement.

And is all well now that he is shifted out as the convenient goat for the system of bureaucratism? Not at all, not at all. There is no essential difference between the removed Weismans and the remaining

In January 1930, the collegium of the G. P. U., based itself upon treacherous information of the renegade Karl Radek, condemned to capital punishment comrade Blumkin, member of the C. P. S. U. to his last day. Under conditions that have remained obscure, the collegium of the G. P. U. sentenced to death comrades Rabinovitch and Silov, members of the C. P. S. U., who were accused at their trial of belonging to the Opposition. At the same time, the old Bolshevik, Yosselevitch was condemned to capital punishment, commuted to ten years of rigorous isolation—solely for the crime of having remained loyal to the Opposition after his return from deportation.

THE DESPERATE METHODS OF CENTRISM

(3) The Oppositionists who are deported are constantly exposed to various repressions. The political isolation, the physical and material privation, that is the fate of many hundreds of comrades deported beyond the Urals, thousands of miles from the industrial centers. The insignificant aid, frequently given belatedly, the lack of work, almost dooms the families of the deportees to starvation (Narym, the region of Priangarsk, Karapalpakia, many regions of Kazakstan, the region of the North the territory of Komy, etc. Very few of the comrades live under conditions of material security, above all in the cities. The deported Bolshevik-Leninists, deprived of all rights, even of the right to defend themselves against the arbitrary actions of the local chieftains, have actually been outlawed. Under one pretext or another, the most absurd and severe persecutions are undertaken against them, they are prohibited from using the libraries, the lecture halls, the movies (Kansk), they are evicted from their homes (Hodjent), the gauntlet is practiced against them with the aid of the militia (Yalutarovsk, Yeneseisk), their food allotments are diminished (Narym, region of the North, etc.) The term of deportation as a rule is not limited for anybody and it happens after a year and a half or two years that a new three years are added on the simple excuse of having corresponded with deported comrades. But the most atrocious persecutions strike those who are to continue in the deportation the struggle against the bureaucracy, the local Soviet organizations and the party. For having revealed the "rottenness" in the G. P. U. of Cheboksarsk (Chuvachia), the colony of the Bolshevik-Leninists was submitted to a pogrom. A group of comrades who discovered a nest of former White guards of Koltchak in the district G. P. U. and the local sections of the party (city of Kamen, Siberia) were transferred to Narym.

Their declarations and protests, addressed to the Central Committee and the C. C. C. remained without a response. The postal isolation deprives the deportees of political relations, even of correspondence with relatives is not assured of an exception. For a good remuneration, the G. P. U. floods the deportees with paid agents who, under the mask of Oppositionists, provoke "amalgams" (Barnaul, Ichim).

Krambergs and Obermeiers. They remain, but the workers do not. The movement pays heavily for the Weismans and those who make them what they are: the upper layer of apparatus men. The Food Workers Industrial Union, with blunder after blunder to its record, blunders conceived by the Fosters, and faithfully executed by the Weismans, has lost heavily in membership. The workers most frequently reply to bureaucratism with a hopeless passivity. Many have returned to the A. F. of L. Others, reacting from Fosterian bureaucratism and mechanical control, are seeking refuge in the I. W. W. which, significantly enough is now making a measure of headway among the cafeteria workers, the former stronghold of the Left wing. The Weismans of the second class and the Weismans of the first class cannot carry on with impunity to the movement. Whatever Midas touched turned to gold under his fingers, whatever is touched by these bureaucrats, trained in incompetence and irresponsibility, crumbles into dust.

The F. W. I. U., which has been in a constant crisis since its inception, must be put under the control of the revolutionary militants, those fighters in the ranks which it still has in goodly number, who can guide its destinies intelligently and successfully. The other method, the method of the Weismans and Obermeiers and Johnstones, has been given more trials than it ever deserved. It has yielded eloquent results. Weisman's case has but served to illuminate them in a harsher brilliance.

The mass repression undertaken in the deportation on the eve of the Sixteenth Congress has as its object the achievement of the extermination of the Leninist cadres of the party. In recent weeks, the best comrades who resisted capitulation, were snatched out of deportation. At Archangel, Alma-Ata, Krasnoyarsk, Milousinsk, Tomsk, Sarakul, Slavgorod, Ufa, Hodjent, Kansk, even on the Angar, hundreds of miles from a railroad, there have been repeated the comedies of raids in which accusatory material was assembled like personal letters, extracts from Soviet papers and from the works of Lenin and Plechanov, books published by the Soviets, etc. The repression still continues today, embracing an ever wider circle of victims. It seems that a new crime is being prepared for the Sixteenth Congress; a "spicy dish" in the words of Lenin, directed solely at masking and justifying all the sordid affairs carried on by the Stalinist leadership against its own party, in order to slander once more the Opposition, to lead the party and the working class into error. Provocation serves as a mask for a shameful repression; slander encourages the criminal method of struggle. With this object, the apparatus blackmailed the party on the eve of the Fifteenth Congress with the aid of the "Wrangel officer", allegedly connected with the Opposition. But it turned out that he was an agent sent in by the G. P. U. (see the stenographic record of the Plenum of the Central Committee of October 1927). With this object, criminal and charlatanist, Yaroslavsky, on the eve of the Sixteenth Congress, attributes to the Opposition the intention of "putting itself at the head of peasant uprisings" and to the Bolshevik-Leninists who are arrested in the deportation, the false accusation is presented of creating anti-Soviet organizations on the U. S. S. R. scale. We warn the Sixteenth Congress that the Stalinist faction, in the struggle against the Opposition, is employing an ever increasing system of repression. In the face of the class enemies, under the conditions of a heavy economic crisis and of the enormous efforts of the proletariat, the apparatus has employed the state's resources for the aims of the factional struggle; in fighting against the Opposition, the apparatus distracts the attention of the G. P. U. from the real enemies of the revolution. By its intolerance for conscious revolutionary thought, the apparatus is destroying the cadres of the party. In associating itself thoroughly with the general proposals of the Opposition, expounded in the document signed by comrades Rakovsky, Muralov, Kasparova and Kossior (removal of paragraph 58, return of L. D. Trotsky from exile, the readmission into the party of all the Oppositionist Bolshevik-Leninists, etc.), the Kansk colony poses before the Congress the following demands:

THE DEMANDS OF THE OPPOSITION

(a) the congress should elect an investigation committee on all the activity of the C. C. C. and the G. P. U. against the Bolshevik-Leninists, especially on the activity of the "secret council", to demand of the C. C. C. and the G. P. U. all material concerning the repression; to name an investigation committee on all the activity of the C. C. C. and the G. P. U. towards the Bolshevik-Leninists to ask for the material the C. C. C. and the G. P. U. have concerning the repression—to demand of the commission to inquire into the conditions of exile and imprisonment of the Bolshevik-Leninists.

(2) to determine the personal culpability of all those who bear a responsibility in the assassination of comrades Butov, Haenrichsen, Blumkin, Rubinovitch, Silov, and the excesses of Solovskiy; to turn over the guilty to party and state justice.

(3) as an immediate measure, to free all the Oppositionists from common law prisons and the Solovskiy correction prison; until a final clarification, to cease all deportation into the concentration camps, to transform to normal conditions the deportation and imprisonment. To free completely the sick comrades and give them the possibility of curing themselves immediately.

(4) to prohibit categorically the G. P. U. from interfering in the internal party struggles, and to suppress the system according to which the members of the Political Bureau are subjected to police surveillance.

(5) to publish the complete results of this inquiry to prohibit secret sentences and the secret destruction of the Bolshevik-Leninists.

(Signed): The Kansk Group: Ar-ranovsky, Bardunai, Zag-ovskv, Zaichuk, Kuznain-skala, Micholov, Romasko, Razovenos, Suvitsky, Sov-kin, Fortuskin, Smith.