

# Reichstag Fire Defendants Persecuted

## THE CASE OF POPOV-TANEV

### New Light Shed on Comintern "Helmsman"

On the second anniversary of the Leipzig trial, which was forced to exonerate the communists accused of the Reichstag fire, the Comintern press of the entire world is publishing memoirs dedicated to "the heroic Dimitroff." Dimitroff's achievements before the fascist court will not be disputed by anyone—even by us, his political opponents. Had the Comintern press restricted itself to recalling, on this second anniversary, the courageous defense put up by Dimitroff, it would remain within the framework of a revolutionary task. And it would be shabby of us to polemize with it on this occasion.

Unfortunately, however, there is more than mere memoirs involved in this case. The Comintern itself links these up to something entirely different, to which it attributes the very greatest significance. This other something is—a confession of error on the part of Popov and Tanev and a resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Bulgaria regarding this confession of error. Quite the ordinary thing, one might object, and as old as the Stalin regime itself. Most assuredly. But Kolarev—who stands at the present time in the good graces of the Comintern because he is alleged to have led, together with Dimitroff the Bulgarian uprising—thinks differently. In the last issue of the Comintern International he writes, "The two documents published herewith are of extraordinary international interest: not only because they deal with the Leipzig trial and the role of the comrades involved in it, but also because the questions dealt with are of tremendous importance for our struggle against fascism in general and against German fascism in particular."

#### What Is Their Crime?

In short, we are concerned here with something of extraordinary international interest, of tremendous importance. Modest question: Can the confession of Popov and Tanev really acquire such importance? Not at all. Popov and Tanev merely defend and explain their position before the court. They condemn Torgier and praise Dimitroff because he executed his Bolshevik line calmly and courageously. Besides that they do not say anything that could in the slightest soil them. Yet despite the editing of the top bureaucrats, Popov's and Tanev's declaration betrays an unbroken pride. Such characteristics are not very pleasing to the bureaucrats. Confessions of guilt which do not drag those condemned to them in the dust and the mud, have a low rating with those gentlemen. Whoever risks such a course, nevertheless, faces complete disgrace or else a new declaration of guilt which has to make up for whatever was omitted. And to be sure Kolarev issues just such a threat: "Popov's and Tanev's confession of guilt can in no case be considered as satisfactory."

What are Popov and Tanev guilty of? Along with Dimitroff they were accused in the Reichstag arson trial. Tanev, a robust peasant type, arrived in Berlin only several days before his arrest. He literally did not speak a single word of German. Popov, a sickly, chronically tubercular man, had been there for some time previous. But he spoke only broken German. In no case could he be considered capable of even a short speech in the German language. They were thus restricted in advance in their defense.

#### Tanev's Attempt at Suicide

In the first few months, in the course of the investigation, they were placed in chains, just like Dimitroff and subjected to the most excruciating cross examinations. The Gestapo knew very well that the three Bulgars had nothing to do with the Reichstag fire. It was therefore their intention all along to link them up under all circumstances with German contacts, in order to at least make possible a juridically motivated conviction on the grounds of high treason. If the Gestapo did not succeed in this case, that was not so much because of Dimitroff but of Popov and Tanev. Because during the months long hardships of the investigation they remained mum about everything. Tanev for instance, surrendered the address of his rooming house only after three months, and then only because it was necessary from the point of view of the conduct of the trial and because he could be sure by then that he would endanger no one by it. The Gestapo had a much easier time with Dimitroff: They found the address of his rooming house in his pocket.

But suppose the Gestapo methods in the course of this investigation were to destroy the power of resistance of the Bulgars? It was probably in consideration of such a possibility that Tanev made an attempt to evade it by suicide—he slashed his wrists.

We do not defend suicide, but what repulsive bureaucratic arrogance it is to accuse Tanev of act-

ing thus out of petty bourgeois, romantic sentiment. This insufferable cynicism may be found literally in the resolution of the C.C. on the resolution of the C.C. on the Popov-Tanev case. Popov and Tanev are further accused of not having understood the political significance of the trial. They had not declined the services of the two official defense attorneys and two more such trifles which are not worthy—two years after the trial—to even be mentioned.

#### Kolarev Sheds Some Light

And all this shall arouse today extraordinary international interest? Perhaps the bureaucrats do not know what they are writing! Perhaps this is just a lot of big talk! No, that is not the case. The real interest begins at another point, where simple-minded persons would never suspect. To be sure, there is not even an indication of it in the resolution of the Bulgarian C.C. But Kolarev in his commentary, and naturally with the approval of Dimitroff, is much more informative. He writes:

"The significance of the resolution of the incoming C.C. of the Communist party of Bulgaria lies not in the condemnation of the Un-Bolshevik conduct of comrades Popov and Tanev but in the sharp criticism of the sectarian position which the previous C.C. of the C.P. of Bulgaria had adopted in conducting the campaign in the Leipzig trial. The sectarian course, aggravated by the factional blindness of the party leadership, made it impossible for it to utilize the effective weapons furnished by comrade Dimitroff not only by his conduct in the Leipzig court, but by his whole long revolutionary struggle at the head of the Bulgarian workers."

These, then are the crimes of the old Bulgarian Central Committee; in the course of the entire long revolutionary past of Dimitroff these communists did not even dream that Dimitroff would become the helmsman of the Comintern at the 7th World Congress. This and this alone is the whole nub of the complaint against Popov and Tanev. That is why they are being spat upon. That is why the new central committee, by the grace of Dimitroff, decided "to remove Popov and Tanev from their leading functions." The criticism of Popov and Tanev's conduct in court only furnished the pretext that was needed to give Dimitroff satisfaction against the old Bulgarian central committee which many years ago once dared to be against him. That to be sure is an experience which really should arouse international interest.

#### Dimitroff as a Leader

What was the occasion for the old Bulgarian Central Committee's opposition to Dimitroff? It is necessary to go into this even though it does not fit into the whole Dimitroff cult. Before the sessions of the Leipzig trial, that is to be exact, before Dimitroff made his mark,

influential members of the Balkan parties were of the opinion that Dimitroff should be expelled because of conspirative unreliability. Popov and Tanev's arrest were undoubtedly due to Dimitroff's unheard of light-mindedness. Besides that many addresses were found on Dimitroff's person upon his arrest. At any rate the Balkan parties took the conspirative work very seriously. Dimitroff's light-mindedness in this work was not accidental. Long before Hitler took power it had become a veritable system with him. That's why people used to speak even at that time with a certain amount of contempt of Dimitroff's methods. Today naturally these same Dimitroff methods are the purest Bolshevism and the critics of these methods are called sectarians.

As chairman of the Comintern Dimitroff did not want to forego his petty revenge. Bureaucratic luck had fallen into his lap and he made the most of it. That it was precisely the Bulgars who delayed in showing the customary subordination to the "beloved leader" was something his pride could not stand. The old Bulgarian Central Committee was sloughed off.

#### The Methods of the "Helmsman"

This is the Dimitroff they call their "great and remarkable leader." They know why. Dimitroff is just as responsible for the bloody defeats of the Bulgarian proletariat as for the defeats in Germany, China, etc. For he was a member of the highest organ of the Comintern. Not a word of protest has ever come from him. On the contrary. He slandered and persecuted the oppositionists who warned them just as much as Stalin's other henchmen. We can recall here an occasion which is not unimportant for a characterization of Dimitroff. With his approval (most likely also at his instance) a raid was arranged in the house of a well known Yugoslav Communist of great revolutionary integrity, because he was suspected of being an oppositionist. Two "functionaries" forced their way into his Berlin lodging with police credentials, searched his trunks and drawers in order to furnish the Balkan leadership with the suspect oppositionist documents. These are methods which were not strange to Dimitroff even at that time. (By the way, whoever knows the method of selection in the Comintern, knows that Dimitroff was advanced to the rank of "leader" precisely because of those characteristics, and not at all because of his conduct at the Leipzig court.)

And today? Today Dimitroff not only bears an equal share of responsibility but a very highest kind of responsibility for the openly treacherous course of the Comintern. Can a serious person believe—that is one who understands the meaning of the proletarian struggle—that revolutionary cadres for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be created with peoples' fronts, class truce, approval of the military budgets, support of the imperialist

armaments (France), etc.? Not even Bernstein had such illusions. For he did not even want a revolution.

Many workers, even some intellectuals, understanding the revisionist course of the Comintern, have placed all their political hope upon a man who did his duty as a revolutionist in a trial. Poor hope! What devastation that ten year era of Stalinist policy must have cost if such patent hopelessness can be called hope.

This is the truth: The Comintern is morally, politically and organizationally destroyed not in spite of but because of the Dimitroffs.

The top bureaucracy had hoped to assure itself of papal infallibility with the aid of Dimitroff. The tremendous propaganda serves this purpose unmistakably. It is used as a means of stifling the very last oppositionist voices at a moment when the policies of the Comintern are becoming open betrayal.

## 2,000 in Guild Picket Line

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to the strike by the Milwaukee Trades Council and the State Federation of Labor. Even Bill Green has pitched in with a letter calling for support of the strike.

#### Strike Morale High

The spirit of the strikers and supporters has been magnificent. Picketing goes on at freezing temperatures. Last week a call for mass pickets was answered one morning at 7 A.M. by 150—although the temperature was 16 below zero!

This strike, which involves 29 editorial workers of the News is teaching the Guild a mighty, demonstrative lesson about the value of affiliation to organized labor. Here the Guild is winning for itself the actual concrete support of the organized labor movement, outside of which it could never hope to move forward a step.

There is another lesson—what industrial union organization would mean to this strike. The technical workers, split into craft organizations can do little more than offer moral encouragement. A statement was issued over the signatures of the typographers, pressmen's, photo engravers', mailers' and stereotypers' unions (all in one plant!) expressing sympathy with the strikers but pointing to existing contractual relations with Hearst as a reason for the absence of any more substantial support.

Together with the Guild there are six unions among the workers in all categories and departments of the Wisconsin News. United in a Wisconsin News Union they could dictate their own terms—even to a Hearst!

#### A National Fight

This has created a somewhat embarrassing position involving mutual recriminations between some of the non-striking union printing workers and strike sympathizers, requiring the Milwaukee Guild to come out with a statement that "no member of the Milwaukee Newspaper Guild has ever expected or asked for more than the moral support of the Allied printing trades union in this struggle of editorial workers."

Trade union support for the Wisconsin News strike must extend beyond Milwaukee to all parts of the country where newspaper and all other workers know Hearst as the labor-hating Fascist who symbolizes everything rotten and reactionary in American life. The Guild is fighting a finish fight. Supporters everywhere must all by fighting Hearst too—by boycotting Hearst papers, conducting anti-Hearst meetings, collecting money for the Wisconsin News strikers and helping the American Newspaper Guild to win its battle.

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# Hitler Seeks Anti-Soviet Alliance

(Continued from Page 1)

back upon the scene; Dimitroff, the doughty hero of social-patriotism, fades a little (a Prague Socialist paper even reported he had gone off to the Crimea for a "rest cure") and the Stalinists are reminded that the struggle for bread has not exactly been entirely suspended in favor of the struggle for "peace" and "democracy."

The Stalinist hesitates. The fate of the bureaucracy's system of capitalist alliances will determine whether this slight leftward lurch will turn into a rout.

#### Our Policy is Unmistakable

Germany's reoccupation of the Rhineland is the latest and loudest explosion in the furnace of imperialist contradictions. Twenty years ago it took far less to precipitate a war. Today the imperialists are infinitely more conscious of the price that is to be paid for a new conflagration. The rise of the October Revolution out of the ashes of the last one still haunts their harried dreams.

Only by working to guarantee the October of tomorrow, by guaranteeing irreconcilable and consistent struggle against all imperialist ruling classes, will we in the crises to come preserve the conquests of the October of yesterday.

What does this mean to every revolutionist? To every worker? It means that he must quicken his pace, just as the imperialists are hastening theirs. It means that we must unite all those committed to the overthrow of capitalism, generator of wars, in the ranks of a firmly knit revolutionary party, united in a revolutionary international, free of the social and national reformist and patriotic garbage of the existing internationals, dispel all illusions of "democratic" security, carry on the struggle to organize the workers for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and if war overtakes us, to fight against all odds and with the utmost clarity to defeat our own imperialist ruling classes, to turn imperialist war into civil war.

#### The Logic of Hitler's Position

For capitalism there is a profound logic in Hitler's point of view. It is possible that his logic may be unable to surmount the complicated tangle of inter-imperialist contradictions at the outset but when tomorrow or even in the course of the imperialist war that may finally break, the Third Reich, Britain, France, Italy and their satellites sit around a table to decide on the destruction of the Soviet Union, this logic may be finally driven home, even for Stalin, Browder and Gil Green.

What is the immediate prospect? Hitler's move into the Rhineland may drive the imperialist powers helplessly into the cauldron of war. But that an effort will be made to arrive at some compromise is already unmistakably clear.

#### Either way, the Workers State is in mortal danger.

The whole sweet dream of national socialist security founded upon a system of European alliances is crumbling before our very eyes. The utter bankruptcy of the League of Nations, once again revealed in Italy's war of aggression against Ethiopia, the brittle character of the promises made by the Soviet Union's allies, the imminent threat that these promises will be washed away and withered in the storm, must be driven home, even to the hopeless bureaucratic centrists, who today rule the destinies of the Soviet Union.

#### New Turn in Preparation?

There is ample evidence of a new lurch by the bureaucracy under the pressure of these events. About two months ago Radek, in Ivesita, regrettably admitted the futility of the League of Nations' sanctions. His conclusion: Russia must rely upon its own national forces. Included in these "national forces" are the border patrols abroad.

In the last few weeks the Stalinist International, which threw all its forces behind the League, whose sections in all the "allied" countries fervently promised complete support of capitalist armies, and offered support in advance to any nation which would line up with the Soviet Union, has now, in classic centrist manner, staggered back another step. Kuusinen comes

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## Nippon Army Holds Reins

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hours the men who guide the destinies of the Japanese Empire decided that for the moment a stop-gap arrangement which in reality strengthened the hand of the Fascist and military elements while giving the appearance of attenuating the crisis was needed. The answer was—Hirota. The tactic of the moment will be—consolidation.

Gen. Kawashima, who was relatively "moderate", has retired from the War Office in favor of Gen. Chuichi Terauchi, who is relatively "aggressive" Gen. Sadao Araki, the real leader of the ultra-nationalists, has retired again for the moment into the background.

#### "Incidents" Cease Temporarily

All this does not take place with Michivellian smoothness. There can be little doubt that the "moderate" pressure on the Emperor was great. It was great enough to bring about the appointment of Hirota rather than Baron Hiranuma, who is the outspoken leader of a frankly Fascist organization. It was not great enough to enable Prince Konoye, a "moderate" to take the reins of power which the Emperor offered to him.

Meanwhile on the actual potential war fronts another temporary shift has taken place. The series of incidents on the Outer Mongolian frontier, which we described last week as provocative "feelers" by the Japanese military who wanted to know the extent to which Moscow would back Mongolia, have abruptly ceased. Stalin, in his own way, gave Tokyo the answer when he flatly told Roy Howard that the U.S.S.R. would come to the support of the Outer Mongolian republic in the event of a clash.

#### Support for Outer Mongolia

Potential support for Outer Mongolia is coming from another direction as well. An army of 10,000 Reds under Mao Tse-tung has marched northward from Szechwan and Shensi into Shansi, with the apparent intention of making its way into Suiyuan and there providing a military buffer on Japan's left flank and hindering the too-easy advance of Japanese-controlled forces into Inner Mongolia.

These Red forces, dislodged from any permanent base and more than ever cut off from the Chinese proletariat in the urban centers of the Yangtze Valley and the South, have been converted into another instrument of the politico-military tactics of the Soviet bureaucracy. Under the "new line", which involves the return in China to the disaster-ridden concept of a bloc of classes to "fight" imperialism, Stalinism has cynically abandoned even its lip service to the hope of proletarian revolution in China, which will alone ensure the forging of an alliance in Asia stronger than the Japanese imperialism which is now sharpening its sword for the inevitable clash.

## Jail French Bolsheviks

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ding us for our anti-militarist propaganda the S.P. was expelling us from its ranks for our struggle for revolutionary defeatism.

Challaye followed, declaring his solidarity. His remaining arguments were those of a pacifist. "The army," he said, "must not be diverted by national defense. These young people are acting in the best tradition of Jaures, that is to say, of republican defense."

"Hold on!", the judge interrupted, "the accused do not want the soldiers to remain at the service of national defense outside the conflict. They are against national defense and call upon the soldiers to join ranks with the proletarians."

#### Revolutionists on the Stand

The bourgeois judge is very well aware of the class struggle. Then a few words from Deglise, revolutionary socialist, in which he described the misery of the soldiers in the barracks: the judge interrupted him, cutting him off and calling upon the attendants to remove him from the stand.

The floor was then given to the accused, all of whom affirmed their revolutionary will.

G. Brun, former business manager of Revolution, admitted his responsibility. "I am a socialist," he stated, "and not an anarchist." Meicheur read a statement admitting guilt for his revolutionary action.

Maria Craipeau declared that even if she had known that the paper was banned, she would have sold it. She defended the right of young workers to call upon their brothers in uniform to fraternize, to refuse to serve the capitalists and proved that this is a fundamental doctrine of communists. (That is what the Revolutionary Socialist Youth fight for today under the banner of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. She concluded with the slogan: "Long live the J.S.R.!" "Long live the Fourth International!")

After a plea of Leo Lagrange for G. Brun, Rous and Gerard spoke of the bloody policy of the decree-laws.

On Thursday February 13th, the judges rendered their verdict. Fearing the spread of the affair they sentenced our three comrades to one month in prison and 100 francs fine each.

## Cross Framed in Ill. Court

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Technically, Cross was arrested and charged with "driving an auto while intoxicated." Cross was arrested in a car accident which occurred Christmas Eve of last year. The total damages amounted to \$7. The damages were paid. No one was injured; not one of the persons whose car was damaged complained or prosecuted. Yet States Attorney Seyffrit, notorious for his "red-baiting" and frame-up of unemployed workers brazenly stated he would "get" Cross.

The "getting" is not one sided, however. Labor is aroused and they are out to get Cross out of prison by appealing his case to a higher court; more than that—the militant workers of Macoupin county will render a verdict in the coming elections for states attorney by retiring Michael Seyffrit for his anti-labor activities.

#### Organize Defense Committee

A committee has been organized composed of members of the miner's union, Illinois Workers Alliance and other labor organizations. Local I, Progressive Miners of America has already pledged its support after John Battuello, left wing leader, delivered a fiery speech flaying Michael Seyffrit for his anti-labor activities.

The defense committee has retained two local attorneys, but a desire that Albert Goldman, noted socialist attorney, be retained for the case was expressed by the majority of the committee. "The reactionaries put Cross in jail," one of the defense group said, "but it'll take the radicals to get him out. So we don't want to take any chances. We want this case to be handled along the real labor, class struggle lines."

#### Funds Needed

At least a hundred dollars is needed for the initial expense of the defense. Cross is in jail because he fought for labor. Tomorrow the Macoupin county reactionaries may imprison our brave left wing miners. Let's all put our shoulders to the wheel by raising money and getting Cross out of jail and eventually absolved of the rotten frame-up.