

The Trial of the Dantzig Trotskyists

How the Fascist Prosecutor Follows in the Footsteps of Stalin and Vyshinsky

Twelve days before the trial of fake "Trotskyists" in Moscow—Piatakov, Radek et al.—the Fascists in Danzig held a trial of genuine Trotskyists—Dr. Jakubowski and nine of his associates. The grandiose Moscow trial, which staggered the whole world, naturally distracted attention away from the Danzig trial. The great world press reported almost nothing about the manner in which the Gestapo (German Secret Police) legally disposed of the Danzig revolutionists. Meanwhile, the Danzig trial is well worth noticing for itself as well as for the light it casts upon the Moscow trial, or rather, for the glaring exposure of the latter.

The Fascist Press Story

Only a few days ago I received from friends a copy of the fascist newspaper *Der Danziger Vorposten* containing an account of the court trial; also copies of the illegal publication of the Danzig organization of the "Trotskyists" namely, their paper *Spartakus*, and several of their proclamations.

Der Danziger Vorposten for December 9, 1936 writes: "After careful surveillance and preparation on the part of the political police, the latter was able a few days ago to expose a secret communist organization, the *Spartakus*, and to arrest most of the members". All told some sixty individuals were seized. The criminals, according to the police, tried "to make their organization the rallying centre of all the enemies of the state. They carried on intensive work, issued leaflets, distributed secret literature smuggled in from abroad, collected funds etc." "One of the leaders of the organization even paid a visit to Trotsky in Norway in the summer of this year (1936).... Prior to the time the secret organization was apprehended, a lively correspondence with Trotsky was in all probability conducted through the Polish post".

In these first few lines the familiar melodies already ring: You have a Trotskyist organization as the "rallying center of all the enemies of the state" (this time the Fascist state); you have a trip by one of the leaders to Trotsky—which reminds us of Piatakov's "flight" to Oslo; a lively correspondence between the defendants and Trotsky, and the receipt of "instructions" from him.... It would seem as if Vishinsky's indictment a month and a half later was patterned on the Danzig model.

Vishinsky's Language

Of the sixty who were arrested only ten, ranging in age from 23 to 57, were brought to trial. How the Nazis disposed of the others remains unknown. Dr. Franz Jakubowski, a German citizen, was stipulated as the leader of the organization and the principal accused. All the others are citizens of Danzig. The report of the court proceedings declares that the "leader of the Trotskyist gang" gave a brief account of his revolutionary work. In Danzig they use the same terminology as in Moscow: The organization of the opposition is invariably referred to as a "gang". The twenty-five-year old Jakubowski became a Marxist in 1930, a Communist in 1932, and a Trotskyist in 1935. Jakubowski was intimate with another young Marxist, Dr. Siegfried Khasien, who was, according to the indictment, the individual that visited Trotsky in Oslo.

To quote the indictment, the

Danzig Trotskyists in their proclamation and newspaper "trampled into mud everything German, and on the contrary, extolled Soviet Russia".

Upon his arrest Dr. Jakubowski was found in possession "not only of printed materials but also American dollars and English pounds." This section of the Gestapo indictment likewise seems a miniature model for the accusations of the G.P.U., with this difference, that the Moscow "Trotskyists" trampled into mud everything Soviet and kowtowed to Fascism, while the Danzig Trotskyists did just the opposite. While Piatakov received marks from German firms, Jakubowski was discovered in possession of dollars and pounds.

Fascist Indignant

Vorposten for January 12 prints a photograph of the courtroom during the speech of the state prosecutor whose name was not Vishinsky but Hoffman. The courtroom, as the newspaper reports, was jammed with spectators. The accused were charged with maligning the Government, disturbing the peace, circulating false information, violating the press laws, and, lastly, being in illegal possession of weapons.

If the Danzig Trotskyists "extolled Soviet Russia", then they evidently made an exception of Stalinist justice. For it was especially held against Jakubowski that in an article of his "the Moscow judicial farce is compared with the trial of the Reichstag incendiaries." The state prosecutor (Hoffman and not Vishinsky) waxed indignant over this "astounding comparison". The speeches of the accused were not printed. They did not recant nor did they praise Hitler but they did set forth their revolutionary views.

The ten accused, two women among the number, received a total sentence of 13 years imprisonment whereof Jakubowski's share—for whom the prosecutor demanded five years' hard labor—came to three years and three months in prison. In passing sentence the court declared among other things the following: "The Trotskyist league must be looked upon as a communist organization. True, differences exist between the Trotskyists and the other communists but these concern not the world-outlook but only questions of party tactics." In conclusion, the presiding judge expressed his regret that the chief criminal Dr. Kissien happened to be in Copenhagen and not in the prisoner's dock. The Danzig government had the intelligence, of course, to refrain from demanding the extradition of Kissien.

Trotskyists Hit Fascism

Of enormous political interest are the publications of the *Spartakus Bund* which delineate fully the political physiognomy of that organization. We have heard from the Gestapo that the conspirators used to resort to the "Polish post" in order to transmit materials in which insults were heaped upon "everything German". Yet, the manifesto on the Spanish events begins with the following words: "The German and Polish fascist Governments have hypocritically proclaimed their neutrality in the Spanish civil war. As a matter of fact, they are the constant purveyors of arms to the Spanish fascists."

A circular which calls upon the dockworkers to do all in their power to prevent any further

By Leon Trotsky

shipment of war materials is signed: "Internationalist-Communists of German Danzig Group (Trotskyists)." Thus the *Spartakus Bund* considers itself a part of the nationwide German organization of the Trotskyists, the very same that, according to Vishinsky, entered into an alliance with the Gestapo as far back as 1932. The alliance of Trotskyists with the Gestapo took place, as is well known, prior to the very formation of the Gestapo itself.

Call for 4th International

In a proclamation devoted to the collapse of the old workers' parties we find the following declaration: "By their policies they prepared their own doom. As long as they could they continued to instill their adherents with illusions, and thereby restrained them from struggling against the Nazis." The leaders of the *Spartakus Bund* do not sow illusions. They write: "We know that it is no easy thing to do away with fascism. Work, hard and dangerous, long and stubborn work is necessary to prepare for its downfall.... Help us build a new communist party which will give revolutionary leadership to the proletariat. Help us build the Fourth International which will lead the world revolution to victory."

The Danzig fascists have advanced the slogan: "Danzig must become the anti-Bolshevist fortress on the Eastern German frontier." According to Vishinsky, the Trotskyists should have constituted a part of the garrison of this fortress. They refuse, however, to conform in any way to this pattern. They write in their paper: "Not collaboration with the bourgeoisie but the overthrow of fascism by the armed might of the proletariat—that is the task of the Danzig anti-fascists. The organization of workers in the industrial enterprises, in the unemployed bureaus and in the forced labor camps to resist and actively struggle against national-socialism—that is the sole means of overthrowing fascism."

What is the attitude of the Danzig Trotskyists to the defense of the U.S.S.R.? "Hitler offers himself as a super-wrangler"—writes the organ of the *Spartakus Bund*—"for the imperialist crusade against the Soviet Union.... Stalin and his bureaucracy constitute the greatest danger to the existence of the Soviet power. In their home policy they have supplanted the rule of the proletariat with the rule of the bureaucracy; in foreign policy they have given preference to an alliance with the bourgeoisie as against the support of the proletariat. But they haven't as yet succeeded in destroying the most important social conquests of the October revolution. Private ownership of the means of production still remains abolished in Russia. Therefore the defense of the U.S.S.R. remains the unconditional duty of the proletariat." Let us not forget that this was written on Hitler's own territory.

Stalinist Hypocrisy

In August 1936, a few days before the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial, the Danzig group of the Stalinists turned to the *Spartakus Bund* with a proposal for a united front. But no sooner were the negotiations opened than the Moscow trial broke. On the very

next day the Danzig Stalinists wrote: "The tie-up with the Gestapo does not come to us a surprise. After all, the Trotskyist fraternity in Danzig has long been the espionage and provocationist center of the Danzig Gestapo." This episode provides on a small scale an example of the corruption that the G.P.U. introduces in the ranks of the working class the world over. The Danzig Trotskyists replied with scorn: "Had we been connected with the Gestapo, you would have been clapped in jail long ago, for you yourselves were in negotiation with us."

As matters turned out, it was the members of the *Spartakus Bund* who shortly found themselves in jail!!

Moscow and Danzig

The traits of resemblance between the Danzig and the Moscow trials should not, however, obscure from our view the fundamental difference between them. The Danzig indictment in all its essential aspects was genuine; the Moscow trial—fraudulent from top to bottom. In Danzig unimpeachable material proofs, seized during the arrests, were produced. No revolutionary organization can exist and function without a program and a press. Through their modest mimeograph machine, the Danzig Trotskyists maintained their contact with the masses. At the trial they renounced neither their ideas nor their publications. They acknowledged their solidarity with me both in their press and in the courtroom. The report of the court proceedings hasn't a word to say about "recantations" in the prisoners' dock in Danzig there sat my real co-thinkers and not enemies of mine who assumed a mask of friendship by command of the police.

Mention was made in the court of Kissien's journey to Oslo. In

dealing with the "flight" of Piatakov, I made reference to it. But the whole thing is this: that Kissien did really visit me in July 1936 while traveling from Danzig to Denmark. At the time this visit was reported in the Norwegian press. The conditions under which I live exclude the possibility of any secret visits.

"Instructions" Non Existent

To be sure, the assertion that I sent "instructions" to Danzig is sheer fiction. Of the Danzig group I learned from Kissien only a few days prior to my internment and I engaged in no correspondence with it. But this does not essentially change anything in the matter. There is between us a bond of close ideological solidarity. As the publications of the *Spartakus Bund* eloquently testify, its young leaders were perfectly able to find their way in political questions, without any of my "instructions".

The fascist prosecutor did not charge the Danzig Trotskyists with terrorism, sabotage and espionage, nor did he demand their heads. The explanation for this is to be found in the fact that the totalitarian regime in Danzig is still young and the public opinion of the ruling party itself is still unprepared for such measures. Stalin is now stepping to the fore as the educator of fascism. The G.P.U. is giving lessons to the Gestapo. When Hitler's position becomes still more difficult, the German Vishinskys will chop off the heads of the revolutionary workers on the charge of terrorism, sabotage and espionage. The seeds of the Moscow frame-ups, we need not doubt, will not fall on barren soil. But the seeds sown by the *Spartakus Bund* will likewise sprout revolutionary shoots in their time.

Mexico, April 29, 1937.

Ask Aid of Yipsels in New York Fight

(Continued from page 4)

pellers have read themselves out of the organization. The YPSL will be carried on and preserved by the nine members of the DEC whose names are undersigned, organized as the Provisional District Executive Committee of the New York District.

Comrades! the split has been forced by Clarity and the right wing. Every comrade must take his stand, with or against the splitters, with or against the left wing, with or against the representatives of revolutionary socialism. You must take action now.

Attend the general membership called for this Thursday, at which the rotten policy of the Clarity caucus will be exposed. Not by rumors—but by proof!

Elect delegates to the left wing conference to be held on Saturday, August 28. After the national convention, a regular district convention will be held. Elect left wing delegates to the national convention.

Carry on the Young Peoples Socialist League! Build a revolutionary YPSL.

With Socialist Greetings

Donald Bergner
Hal Draper
Mary Ford
Manny Garrett
Anne Krack
Irving Panken
Alex Retzkin
Oscar Shoenfeld

Address all communications to the Provisional Committee—Room 731—41 Union Square, N. Y. C.

Nankin Bans Truth of Moscow Trials at Bid of Stalin Ambassador

Truth about the Stalinist frame-ups in Moscow is spreading in ever-widening circles across the face of the earth. We have received from China a 182 page book entitled "Behind the Moscow Trials", written by Chang Chia-chu and published by the Oriental Book Company in Shanghai.

This first book in the Chinese language on the subject of Stalin's most recent crimes against the revolution, is divided into eight chapters and contains, in addition to original material, a translation of Trotsky's Hippodrome speech and the pamphlet "World Voices on the Moscow Trials".

A Chinese comrade writes that shortly after the appearance of the book, the reactionary Kuomintang Government at Nanking was requested by Dimitri Bogomolov, Soviet ambassador to China, to place it under ban and that this request was promptly accepted. At the same time, Nanking gave formal permission for the publication of Moscow's "official record" of the court proceedings in the Zinoviev-Kamenev and Radek-Piatakov trials.

Those acquainted with conditions in China under the Kuomintang regime know what the banning of a book involves. In Chinese-controlled territory, the Kuomintang police raid all bookshops, seize copies of the proscribed publication and have them destroyed.