

# The End of Henry Yagoda

## Stalin Imprisons the Head of the G.P.U. Because He Knew the Inside Story

By Victor Serge

The vast police coup d'etat begun by Stalin last July in order to liquidate Bolshevism and to stabilize his personal regime continues, and each day brings its new surprise. It will soon be clear that the importance of this period of eighteen months is not inferior to that of a Thermidor combined with an Eighteenth Brumaire. The arrest of Yagoda is the sensation of the last few days. It even casts into the shade the arrest, which has firmly been confirmed, of Christian Rakowsky, and the rumors that Leon Sosnovsky, like General Putna, has been shot in prison without trial. (Sosnovsky, the brilliant Bolshevik journalist, was so greatly appreciated by Lenin that he made him his mouthpiece at the first pan-Russian Executive of the Soviets'. But nothing definite is known about this, and perhaps nothing ever will be known.

A Government communique,

signed by Kalinin, announced the accusation of Henry Grigorievitch Yagoda: Malfeasance in office, crimes committed in the course of the fulfilment of his functions... What functions? Yagoda is an old Bolshevik from before October, member of the Cheka; in 1928 he sympathized with the Right Opposition (Bukharin, Rykov), but not for long.

.... As head of the G.P.U. for many years he organized the repression against the technicians, against every opposition, in every sphere. Thousands of death warrants received his signature. He ruled the vastest concentration camps in the world—a position which gained him a decoration for the construction of the White Sea Baltic Canal, by convict labour.

He watched over Stalin, whom he was seen to follow step by step on ceremonial occasions.

Chief Commissar of the Criminal Police, People's Commissar for the Interior, member of the Central Committee of the Party, commander of the special troops of the G.P.U., he was in truth the most dreaded man in the U.S.S.R., the one whose conscience carried — by order — the heaviest burdens: Chief of Police to the "genial Leader." In this capacity he presided over the secret examinations (what horrible concoctions!) for the Zinoviev trial and over the execution of the sentences against the Sixteen. Immediately after the Zinoviev-Kamenev-Smirnov trial his disgrace became known.

A scape-goat was required to shoulder the responsibility of this badly managed judicial comedy. Above all was it necessary to suppress Yagoda because

he had become, in his turn, an intolerably disturbing witness. He is accused. Everything can be blamed on him: he committed — by order — all the crimes that are required, and he could commit no worse or more unpardonable crime than to defend himself—for this could only be done by accusing others. He is irretrievably lost.

I picture him to myself in one of those cells in the Moscow prison of the G.P.U., which he himself had built, reading again the regulation which he signed, awaiting an examination, a judgment, an execution, the rites of which he knows by heart—understanding at last what he has done, what he has become, what those like him have made of the Revolution!

And I think also of Romain Rolland, who met him at Moscow and devoted to him such a hand-

some article. The great chief of the concentration camps and of those silent executioners in all the dungeons of the U.S.S.R. conquered at a stroke the heart of the author of Jean Christophe.

Is this not the occasion for Rolland to write a new article on Yagoda to try to save even this life—for is it not enough blood and too much cynicism on the part of the Master to attempt thus in broad daylight to suppress his servitors?

Already last September I wrote: "The whole generation of October is condemned. Finished. Lost. Every one strangled in a trap. The few last survivors of the old Bolshevik cadres—the Litvinovs, Krestinskys, Bubnovs, Antonov-Ovseenkos — are also condemned, in the same way or by others means. Their existence has become incompatible with that of the regime."

## Yipsels Remain True to Revolutionary Tradition

By Hal Draper

"The Yipsels show in advance what the party will be like a year from now"—that is what the left wing Yipsels used to boast during the last few years, when each advance of the party to the left was presaged and prepared by a similar movement among the youth. In the fight against the first Old Guard, the YPSL was won soonest, and became a powerful lever in swinging the party.

Today too the national YPSL belongs to the left wing. And this is one of the reasons why the Right wing entered upon its present desperate campaign to split and liquidate the party before the left wing gains a majority. It is also one of the surest indications that the Appeal group is the heir and continuator of the best left wing traditions of the movement.

### Majority with Appeal

An overwhelming majority of the YPSL supports the left wing Appeal group. Here is a quick survey of the national situation.

(1) Out of approximately 1200 members, we have at least 800. And as usual, the percentage is much more on the basis of active membership only.

(2) Almost all leading cities and states are ours: California, with about 200 members, among whom the non-Appealites can be counted on two hands; Ohio; Massachusetts; Chicago; upstate New York; eastern Pennsylvania; Newark. In New York City, Appeal is the largest group, larger than Clarity, but not a majority, having received 41 per cent of the vote in the city election held last May. In Philadelphia, steady gains are being made.

(3) Virtually only Appeal cities and states have registered growth in numbers, in activity and mass influence. California has grown in the last year, under Appeal leadership, from two circles to ten or more, with inspiring work especially among the agricultural workers. Chicago's membership has actually doubled under Appeal control. Meanwhile the Clarity centers at: Pittsburgh, the only important Clarity city outside of New York and Philadelphia, is a good example of this.

And the little-tin-soldier lead-

ers of Clarity pretend that they are the mass-workers while we are.... sectarians!

Clarity however controls the NEC (elected two years ago) and the national machinery; and like the capitalist class, they are determined that the Left shall not win legally. Panicky, they are resorting to every shady trick to keep a formal majority at the coming National Convention in September.

### Shady Clarity Devices

(1) The NEC shifted the place of the convention from the mid-West (Ohio or Chicago) to Philadelphia, which is a Clarity city and all the way East, thus making it more difficult to send delegates from the Appeal centers in the West.

(2) The basis of representation is nothing short of weird: one delegate for 5 members, two for 8, three for 23. The exact effect of this is uncertain at present.

(3) The books were closed for dues payments counting towards convention representation on May 30, when the convention call was issued by the NEC, without any previous drive for paying up. All that was done was to insert a notice in YPSL Affairs, which goes only to leading comrades. At the same time, circles were allowed to purchase stamps on credit up to May 30, even though they paid at any later time. The result is that many places will not be fully represented because they were not given a chance to make a drive; and the Clarity National Office can use the credit provisions to jack up the representation of Clarity circles by bookkeeping transactions.

(4) That Clarity is using such crooked measures to steal the convention has been proved through a private letter which came to light in New York, from Irving Barshop, New York Executive Secretary, to Al Hamilton. It shows, first, utilization of Altman's split campaign in New York to get rid of Appealites in strategic circles where their vote and influence would count; and second, direct falsification of League records to increase Clarity representation. One can assume that this practise was not limited to New York.

### Expulsions Begin in New York

In New York the Clarity-Right wing bloc in control of the YPSL has recently been conducting as real a split campaign as has Altman in the party. When four Yipsel applicants for the party were rejected as "Trotskyites" (two of them with the consent of two Clarityites on the party Executive), the YPSL Clarityites illegally dropped them from the League also, because "Altman demands it". All posts are being denied Appealites. Unprecedentedly flimsy charges have been brought against Appealite Executive Committee members. The latest move was the expulsion of Comrade Bergner, who recently broke with Clarity on uncovering the letter referred to above and preferred charges against Barshop. The charges against Barshop were not taken up, but instead Bergner was illegally expelled with no quorum present!

These crooked dealings and provocative attacks on the left wing have so far resulted only in the resignation of a group of members from the YPSL Clarity caucus in New York.

What stands out above all is: if the three-way split which Clarity so desires takes place, there will be no youth organization left but ours. Clarity (and, it goes without saying, Altman) will not be able to salvage enough from their wreckage to maintain a pretense of an organization. The YPSL will continue its traditional custom of going with the left.

### A New Wave of Terror against German Trotskyism

A good illustration for the Stalinist statements about the "traitors and gestapo agents of the 4th International" are the recent trials before the so-called "People Courts".

The "people court" in Hamburg sentenced our comrades as follows:

Hans Breuer, 6 years hard labor; Herbert G., 5 years hard labor; Hans Tapet, 3 1-2 years hard labor; Walter E., 2 1-2 years prison; Frieda Helbe, 2 years prison.

In a few days several other comrades will face the "People Court" of Berlin and Magdeburg.

We have just received the information that one of our leading comrades in Berlin was sentenced to 8 years of hard labor.

## What Norman Thomas Saw in Barcelona

On May 3-7 the workers raised barricades in Barcelona to defend themselves against the counter-revolutionary offensive of the bourgeois-Stalinist bloc. The "agreement" to end the conflict proved to be a complete victory for the counter-revolution. During the next weeks, armed police by the thousands were sent into Catalonia to disarm and oppress the workingclass; the Madrid regime treated Catalonia like a conquered province.

In the midst of the repressions, on May 23, Norman Thomas arrived in Barcelona. Did he talk to any of the workers who had defended themselves on the barricades? Did he talk to the CNT-POUM leaders? Did he talk to anybody except the bourgeois-Stalinist government leaders in Barcelona? He did not!

Yet he had the gall to come back and condemn the workers for "insurrecting." The profound investigations on which Thomas based his conclusions may be surmised from reading the following account of his two-day visit, officially issued on May 26th by the Commissariat of Propaganda of the Generalidad. We print this document as one deserving to be preserved for posterity:

### GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA Presidencia

Comissariat de Propaganda  
Avinguda 14 d'Abril, 442 bis  
Barcelona: Telefon 82215  
COMUNICAT DE PREMSA  
English Edition Number 206  
Barcelona, May 26

### Distinguished Visitors

The President of the Socialist Party of the United States, Mr. Norman Thomas, who has been several times a candidate for the Presidency of his country, has just spent two very busy days in Barcelona, accompanied by Mrs. Thomas, who goes with him on all his travels.

Mr. Thomas, who has been visiting various European countries, had expected to devote more time to Spain, a country which he had not previously visited, but the "red tape" which had to be untangled before he was permitted to leave France by the southern border delayed and in consequence considerably shortened his journey.

On Sunday, May 23rd, the first day of their visit to Spain, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, escorted by

the Commissioner of Propaganda of the Generality of Catalonia, Jaume Miravittles, visited the refugees now accommodated in the great Stadium of Montjuich, as well as the school for refugee children installed in the former monastery of Pedralbes, on both of which Mr. Thomas commented with admiration. Later he spoke on the radio a few words of encouragement to the forces of the Spanish Government, and afterwards viewed by moonlight the beautiful Generality Palace and its fourteenth-century Courtyard of the Oranges.

The following day Mr. Thomas was officially received, at the Palace, by President Companys, who made him welcome with a speech expressing the thanks of the Government for the help given to the cause of the Spanish people by the people of the United States. Mrs. Thomas was presented with a bouquet tied with a ribbon in the colours of Catalonia's ancient flag, whose legend was explained to her.

In the afternoon of the same day Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, at the invitation of President Companys, visited the picturesque mountain of Montserrat, where they were shown through the enormous buildings of the former monastery, and later joined in drinking a toast to Catalonia and to the other democratic governments of the world.

Early on Tuesday morning the distinguished visitors left by car for Valencia, where they will be received by the President of Spain and members of the Government, and shown the work which is being done in the temporary capital of the Spanish Republic.

### Half-Rate on Trial Book

A special edition, for workers at half the regular price, of the "Case of Leon Trotsky", verbatim report of the hearings held from April 10 to 17 in Mexico City by the Dewey Commission of Inquiry, has just been announced by the American Committee for Defense of Leon Trotsky.

Only 2,000 copies are available at half-price. They will be sold only on advance order, with payment. Orders should be sent immediately to the American Committee, Room 1435, 22 East 17 Street, New York City.