

How G.P.U. Hounds Revolutionists

Old Bolshevik, Tarov, Escapes, Testifies to Inquiry Commission

(Continued from last week)

In the meantime, the G.P.U. pursued its work of demoralization. I was dismissed from my job without even receiving the wages due, on the pretext that I had been given a wrong rating. They had me come to the G.P.U., now before one, now before another, of the chief's assistants. One threatened, the other offered privileges, etc. But all to no avail, I remained firm in my position.

Finally, for the last time, I was called before the G.P.U. They proposed that I prove my abandonment of the Opposition by "facts." What kind of facts? "We must teach these Trotskyists how to behave," they answered, and asked me to name the comrades with whom I had worked in the Opposition as far back as 1927-1928. I categorically refused, and I added that for my Oppositionist work in the past I had already served time in prison and in exile but that now, since my abandonment of the Opposition, I pledged myself no longer to work against the leadership of the party. The G.P.U. agent became irritable and called me a faker.

After the conversation with the G.P.U. agent, I became convinced that the only way out of the situation was to escape from exile. But I was constantly watched, probably with the purpose of establishing whether I had any relations with other exiled Oppositionists. I was unemployed, deprived of correspondence with my family and friends. The G.P.U. had a special spy who kept constant watch over me and who did not hesitate to tell me of his role. Nevertheless I succeeded in escaping.

Rakovsky's End

Rakovsky could not do as much. That was impossible for a sick old man. And he was lost. His telegram immediately divided him from the Opposition. The immense confidence that the Oppositionists had in him fell to zero. And the G.P.U. utilized all its methods of repression to force Rakovsky to say B after he had said A. Rakovsky said B, that is, he wrote a long letter against the Opposition, a letter that constituted his political suicide. Rakovsky lost all political dignity. The G.P.U. did not let him escape again from its web.

I ask pardon for dwelling so long on this matter, but I think it may be useful to the commission for arriving at a more profound understanding of the role of the G.P.U. concerning capitulators, and the real relations between the Opposition and the capitulators.

How the G.P.U. Tortures Prisoners

In 1931, the night of January 21st-22nd, the G.P.U. carried out mass arrest of Oppositionists in different cities and places of exile. On the same night, they arrested our entire colony of exiles at Akmolinsk (Jantiev, Khugaev, Djigaev, Davtian, Zapeev, Gassanov, Gogadze, Tsintadze, Michael, and others. The investigation began.

They accused me of having tried to construct a short-wave radio broadcasting station in order to establish communication abroad, with Trotsky. This was recorded in my indictment. I knew nothing about a radio broadcasting station, short wave or any other kind. If it were not for the arrest, it would have been omic. In Kazakstan, at

Akmolinsk, a place where there was not yet a railway, a man trying to construct with bare hands a broadcasting station to communicate abroad with Trotsky!

But the G.P.U. had "located" a witness who declared that we had attempted to build this station together. They even found material proof at the "witness" house, that is, parts of radio apparatus. This witness was a direct agent of the preliminary investigation and "accompanied" us to the Verkhne-Uralsk isolator. There, after three days he handed in a "declaration of recantation" and he was set free so that he could continue his work elsewhere.

From Akmolinsk we were transferred to Petropavlovsk. The investigation of our case was carried on in the inner prison. We were isolated from each other at the start. After a preliminary questioning, I was placed with ordinary criminals. In a cell intended for two or three men, there were from twenty-six to twenty-eight prisoners. We could only sit down. To stretch out, it was necessary to ask the only one lying under the bench to yield his place. We suffered excruciating torture from the lack of ventilation in the cell. It was hot, stifling; bathed in sweat, we felt ourselves suffocating. Our lungs seemed compressed. Even the tiny peep-hole was barred from the outside.

I shall never forget these days of terrible torture. The prisoners organized demonstrations, demanding air, but not a sound came from the corridor; the guards were under orders to maintain absolute silence. They had placed me among the ordinary criminals to force me to give false testimony. But after the questioning, I wrote on the pages of the record: "I consider the entire testimony of the witness, agent of the G.P.U., to be provocative insinuations of the G.P.U." The examinations were terminated. I was sentenced to three years hard labor, with Jantiev, Khudaev, Peter Popov, Zalaev, and two local workers that they had mixed into our case. The rest were deported to the depths of Siberia.

When the G.P.U. men arrest anybody in the street or at home, they never say, "Hands up!" or "Don't move!" but shout, "Lie down!" I first discovered this in Petropavlovsk prison in 1931. The one-eyed executioner of the G.P.U. (well known in the city, of German origin, I forget his name) thus arrested kolkhoz and worker "wreckers." In the beginning, there were very few who consented to lie down before the G.P.U. agent. But the regime ruthlessly destroyed men, and it taught the Soviet citizen to lie down before the G.P.U. agent. Thus are Soviet citizens treated from the moment of arrest, that is to say, when it is not yet established whether they are guilty or not.

Slaughterhouse

In the inner prison of Petropavlovsk, where the author of these lines remained for six months waiting for the sentence pronounced in Moscow, the G.P.U. shot the condemned in a special structure erected directly in the center of the court yard where the prisoners took their daily walks. Generally, when at night they dragged the victim along the corridors to the "slaughter house"—as the prisoners called this place—they gave him an opportunity to cry out, howl, implore,

beg for mercy, etc. This was done with the purpose of frightening the other prisoners. It was not until they reached the courtyard that they gagged the condemned man, and the cries ceased. We knew, by counting the shots, the number of bullets it took to finish the victim. The next day, while walking in the courtyard around this strange structure that reeked of blood, we would learn which of us was missing.

Began in 1928

In August, 1928, I was sitting home one night, reading. Suddenly the door opened, and there appeared a YCLer, Andrusha. Conspiratorial methods had been introduced among us after the Zinovievists split from us and had, on innumerable occasions, turned Oppositionists over to the GPU. For this reason, Andrusha, on being questioned, could not say who had given him the Oppositionist literature that had been found in his possession. They put Andrusha in a cell. There he was tied to the cot, so arranged that water dripped constantly on him. At night he was transferred to an even more terrible place, he was undressed, the barrel of a loaded revolver was pressed against his belly, and they threatened him: "We are going to fire all seven shots if you do not confess!" The YCL'er gave in but did not know whom to name. The G.P.U. gave him time to "regain his senses." He "regained his senses" and remembered me, for he knew that I belonged to the Opposition. He decided then to tell the G.P.U. that it was I who had given him the propaganda material. But he could not remember my name and exact address. He therefore undertook to conduct G.P.U. agents to my lodging.

The G.P.U. men did not venture to search my place immediately. They did it only a month later, when they received a general order from Moscow: arrest and deport all Oppositionists. Then, in a single night, the G.P.U. arrested more than a hundred Oppositionists in our city, in accordance with lists that we ourselves had sent to the Central Committee in the past in order to support by our votes the proposals of our faction.

Hunger-Strike

In the Verkhne-Uralsk isolator in December, 1933 we Oppositionists (about 130 men) declared a hunger strike to protest against the abominations and oppressions of the G.P.U. After eleven days, we no longer felt pangs of hunger. It was no longer difficult for us to continue the hunger strike four or five days, and die. But the G.P.U. did not permit us to die. They fed us forcibly for one day (with a rubber tube inserted into the stomach through the mouth; ten jailors held each of us during this operation) to excite our appetites and torture us with pangs of hunger, in order to break the hunger strike.

Why They Confess

The capitulators have no other way out but to give false testimony and confessions, i. e., to repeat everything the G.P.U. dictates to them. Whoever is acquainted with the ideological dispute between the Opposition and the Stalinists will not be astonished when I say that the great majority of the capitulators abandoned the Opposition only because they could not endure the bestial repression of the G.P.U. Often, having strong

Spanish Govt. Outlaws Criticism, Chains Press

Manuel Irujo, Basque businessman, Catholic, and Minister of Justice of the Valencia Government, issued the following decree, published in the official Gaceta, August 12:

"Whoever censures as fascist, as traitor, as anti-revolutionary, given person or group of persons, unreasonably or without sufficient foundation, or without the (court) authority having pronounced sentence on him (the accused), fails in his duty before the law....

"He who denounces a citizen for being a priest of a religion or for administering the sacrament.... causes an unnecessary and disruptive disturbance of public order when not committing an irreparable crime worthy of penal punishment."

Decree Helps Fascists

This decree puts a complete end to ferreting out of fascists by the workers, as well as halting sharp ideological criticism of the government bloc. It also ends all forms of surveillance of the Catholic priesthood just after the Vatican has openly thrown its support to Franco.

Commenting on a previous circular of Minister Irujo decreeing legalization of Catholic ritual services in private, the CNT's Spanish (Valencia) Bulletin of August 14 declares that his "famous circular had as its end to prepare for the domination of the Catholic Church, that again should be able to wield influence against the people, enforcing the counter-revolution already initiated."

CNT Organ Suspended

Solidaridad Obrera, chief CNT organ, was suspended for five

days on August 7 for having disobeyed orders of the censor. Paulino Gomez, General Delegate of Public Order in Barcelona informed the press that the specific act of disobedience was "that they should not publish white spaces." That is, deletions by the censor must be hidden from the masses by inserting other material. The CNT press had been protesting the censorship in silent fashion by leaving the blank spaces.

The Gaceta of August 11 publishes the decree dissolving the Council of Aragon, in place of which an appointed governor-general is to rule this province. Established September, 1936 with a CNT majority and a program of agrarian collectivization, the Council had ably re-established production in the areas wrested from the Fascists by the Catalan militias.

The CNT of Madrid of August 14 published the following decree of the Ministry of Interior, outlawing all press criticism of the Stalinist regime:

"With repetitions, that permit divining a deliberate plan of offending an exceptionally friendly nation, thereby creating difficulties for the government, various newspapers have occupied themselves with the U.S.S.R. unsuitably.... This absolutely condemnable license should not be authorized by the council of censors.... The disobeying newspaper will be suspended indefinitely, even though it may have been passed by the censor; in that case the censor who read the proofs being held for the Special Tribunal charged with dealing with crimes of sabotage."

convictions but weak constitutions or characters, they were unable to withstand the constant repressions and violence of the G.P.U. In the end, they were destroyed ideologically as well. All the capitulators, without exception in the beginning did not wish to slander the Opposition or to consider their convictions erroneous, "counter-revolutionary" etc. They all began by pledging no longer to carry on factional work. Unemployment, arrests, deportations, executions, concentration camps, tortures in prison, all of these were applied to the Oppositionists in the cruelest form, in accordance with the special orders issued by the head of the Central Committee.

The G.P.U. did not liberate capitulators at once. To begin with, they were required to declare that they considered their beliefs and ideas counter-revolutionary, that those ideas were anti-communist, Menshevik, and that Trotsky was an "agent of the international bourgeoisie." In other words, the G.P.U. did not let them go until it had transformed them into dirty and trampled tatters. After their official renunciation, the capitulators stayed in prison a year, two years, and sometimes more. Many capitulators were even kept in prison after they had served their sentences. During this time, the capitulators had to write dozens of statements. Following repeated interviews with the head of the prison, they would return to their cells in a state of nervous collapse, cursing the G.P.U., cursing themselves, but finding no way out. Finally their political backbone was

broken, and the firm Oppositionist of yesterday was transformed, in the hands of the G.P.U. into a tool against the Opposition.

To cite one more instance relating to this state of affairs: in 1933 (in December), we Oppositionists in the Verkhne-Uralsk isolator began a hunger strike, demanding that the authorities cease arbitrarily prolonging the sentences of the Oppositionists. On the eleventh day of the strike, the prison administration resorted to forcible feeding. The Mensheviks would not tolerate this arbitrary treatment of the Oppositionists, and declared on their side a three day hunger strike as a sign of protest against the G.P.U. outrages in refusing to satisfy the legitimate demands of the prisoners, and risking the death of 130 men. At the same time, newly arrived capitulators whom Stalin—mis-trusting—had decided to imprison in the Verkhne-Uralsk isolator, not only did not support us, but even shouted: "Down with the Opposition! Down with the Trotskyists!"

Such cynical attitude on the part of the imprisoned capitulators toward the Oppositionists on hunger strike aroused the disgust even of the G.P.U. guards. The latter forced the capitulators to be silent, calling such an attitude of prisoners toward other prisoners, "shameful."

And then, after all that in the Moscow trials they tell us that the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition formed a bloc and a center with such men!

Paris, June 12, 1937.

(Abridged by the editor)