

The Beginning of the End

"Stalin Will Depart from the Scene Laden with All the Crimes Which He Has Committed—Not Only as the Grave-Digger of the Revolution but as the Most Sinister Figure in the History of Mankind"

By LEON TROTSKY

The bureaucracy has become the instrument for undermining, demoralizing and degrading the country in all spheres of social and political life. Above all is this true in the sphere of economic life. The charges of sabotage flung right and left have thrown the entire administrative apparatus into chaos. Every objective difficulty is interpreted as a failure on the part of some individual. Every failure is identified, whenever the occasion arises, as sabotage. Every province and every region has had its own Piatakov shot. The en-

gineers in the planning institutions, the directors of trusts and factories, the master-workers are all in mortal fear. No one wants to assume responsibility. Everybody is afraid to show any initiative. At the same time one runs the risk of facing the firing squad for a lack of initiative. The intensification of despotism leads to anarchy. A democratic regime is as indispensable to Soviet economy as is the good quality of raw materials or lubricants. The Stalinist system of management is nothing else but a universal sabotage of economy.

Dictatorship of Ignorance and Lies Poisons Spiritual Life of People

The situation in the sphere of culture is, if that is conceivable, even worse. The dictatorship of ignorance and lies stifles and poisons the spiritual life of 170,000,000 people. The latest trials and the purge as a whole, which is utterly dishonest both in its aims and methods, have completely entrenched the hegemony of slander, vileness, denunciation and cowardice. The Soviet school cripples a child no less gravely than the Catholic seminary from which the Soviet school differs only in that it is less stable. Scholars, educators, writers and artists who show the slightest signs of independence or talent have been terrorized, hounded, arrested, exiled, if not shot. All along the line the incompetent scoundrel triumphs. He prescribes the itinerary to science and dictates to art the laws of creativeness. The stifling stench of putrefaction is wafted from the Soviet press.

Is there anything more disgraceful than the indifference of the bureaucracy to the international prestige of the country? The representatives of the international big bourgeoisie and the military staffs of all countries make a much more lucid accounting of the Moscow frame-ups and of the seamy side of the purge than do many labor organizations that are duped by their leaders. What must be the attitude of the capitalist augurs toward a "socialist" government which stoops to such base adventures? Berlin and Tokyo, at any-

The Communist International Supports the Counter-Revolution in Spain

Equally disastrous is the brand of diplomatic work that is being accomplished through the apparatus of the Comintern. England and France by themselves would never have succeeded in foisting upon revolutionary Spain a bourgeois counter-revolutionary government of the type of Negrin. The so-called Communist International has become an indispensable transmitting mechanism to the diplomats of London and Paris. In the struggle to win the confidence of the French and British bourgeoisie Stalin's chief concern throughout has been to prevent the Spanish workers from taking the path of the socialist revolution. The aid given by Moscow to the "People's Front" government was always conditioned upon the demand of more stringent measures against the revolutionists. As was to be expected, the struggle against the workers and peasants behind the lines invariably led to defeats at the front. The Moscow clique is

rate, could not but have known that the charges against the Trotskyists and the Red Generals of betraying the state in the interests of German and Japanese militarism are sheer twaddle. We need not, naturally, nurse an illusion about the morality of the Japanese, the German or any other government. It is, after all, a question not of a competition in the observance of the ten commandments but of an appraisal of the stability of the Soviet regime. The Moscow government came out completely discredited from the trials it had organized. Its enemies, as well as its possible allies have a far lower estimate of its strength and authority than they did prior to the latest purge. This appraisal becomes, in its turn, one of the most important factors in international regroupings. Meanwhile, the government of the USSR has been retreating step by step before its weakest adversary, Japan. The boastful articles and speeches which accompany these capitulations will fool nobody. The Moscow oligarchy is waging internal warfare and is therefore incapable of external resistance. The surrender of the Amur Islands has completely untied the hands of Japan with respect to China. It is quite probable that Litvinov was instructed in advance to tell the Japanese diplomats: "You can do whatever you please with China but don't touch us. We will not meddle." The ruling clique has no concern for anything except its own self-preservation.

as impotent against Franco as it is against the Mikado. And just as Stalin requires scapegoats for his own sins in domestic policy, so too in Spain the defeats engendered by the reactionary policies have compelled him to seek salvation in the destruction of the revolutionary vanguard.

The methods of amalgam and frame-up, developed in Moscow, are transferred full-grown to the soil of Barcelona and Madrid. The leaders of the POUM who could only be accused of opportunism and lack of resoluteness toward Stalinist reaction were suddenly proclaimed to be "Trotskyists" and, consequently, allies of Fascism. G.P.U. agents in Spain "discovered" letters written in invisible ink by themselves which established the ties of the Barcelona revolutionists with Franco in accordance with all the rules of the Moscow frame-up. For the execution of the gory directives there is no lack of scoundrels. The former revolu-

tionist Antonov-Ovseyenko, who recanted his Oppositional sins in 1927 and who was in mortal fear in 1936 lest he fall into the prisoner's dock, announced in Pravda his complete readiness to strangle "Trotskyists" with his own hands. This individual was promptly dispatched in the guise of a consul to Barcelona, with precise instructions as to whom to strangle. The arrest of Nin on a patently frame-up charge, his being kidnapped from jail and his being secretly murdered are the handiwork of Antonov-Ovseyenko. But the initiative, of course, does not come from him. Important business of this sort is never undertaken except upon direct instructions from the "General Secretary" himself.

Amalgams on European soil are needed by Stalin not only to distract attention from his own utterly reactionary international policy but also to reinforce the over-crude amalgams on Soviet soil. The mutilated corpse of Nin is intended to serve as a proof-of Piatakov's flight to Oslo. The matter is not confined to Spain alone. Preparations have long been on the way in a number of other countries. In

Czechoslovakia, a German emigre, an old and impeccable revolutionist, Anton Grylewicz, was arrested on the suspicion of—connections with the Gestapo. The accusation was doubtless manufactured by the G.P.U. and supplied in ready-made form to the obliging Czech police. Genuine and alleged Trotskyites are being subjected to persecution especially in those countries which have had the misfortune to become dependent upon Moscow: Spain and Czechoslovakia. But that is only the beginning. By utilizing international complications, and the hirelings of the Comintern, who are ready for anything, and last but not least, the resources of the expanding gold industry, Stalin hopes to attain the application of identical methods to other countries. Reaction everywhere is not averse to getting rid of revolutionists, especially if the work of frame-ups and murders is taken upon itself from behind a corner by a foreign "revolutionary" government, which operates with the aid of domestic "friends" who receive their pay from the self-same foreign budget.

Stalinism the Scourge of the Soviet Union and Leprosy of Labor Movement

Stalinism has become the scourge of the Soviet Union and the leprosy of the world labor movement. In the domain of ideas Stalinism is a cipher. But by way of compensation it disposes of a colossal apparatus which exploits the dynamics of the greatest revolution in history and the traditions of its heroism and its conquering spirit. From the creative role of revolutionary violence in a given historical period, Stalin, with his congenital empirical narrowness, has deduced the omnipotence of violence in general. Imperceptibly for himself he has passed from the revolutionary violence of the toilers against the exploiters to counter-revolutionary violence against the toilers. Under old names and formulas the work of liquidating the October revolution is thus being consummated.

No one, not excluding Hitler, has dealt socialism such deadly blows as Stalin. This is hardly astonishing since Hitler has attacked the working class organizations from without, while Stalin does it from within. Hitler assaults Marxism. Stalin not only assaults but prostitutes it. Not a single principle has remained unpolluted, not a single idea unsullied. The very names of socialism and communism have been cruelly compromised, from the day when uncontrolled policemen making their livelihood by a "communist" passport, gave the name socialism to their police

regime. Revolting profanation! The barracks of the G.P.U. are not the ideal for which the working class is struggling. Socialism signifies a pure and limpid social system which is accommodated to the self-government of the toilers. Stalin's regime is based on a conspiracy of the rulers against the ruled. Socialism implies an uninterrupted growth of universal equality. Stalin has erected a system of revolting privileges. Socialism has as its goal the all-sided flowering of individual personality. When and where has man's personality been so degraded as in the U. S. S. R.? Socialism would have no value apart from the unselfish, honest and humane relations between human beings. The Stalin regime has permeated social and personal relationships with lies, careerism and treachery. It is not Stalin, of course, who determines the road taken by history. We possess the knowledge of the objective causes which prepared the path for reaction in the U.S.S.R. But it is no accident that Stalin rode on the crest of the Thermidorian wave. He was able to invest the greedy appetites of the new caste with their most vicious expression. Stalin does not bear any responsibility for history. But he does bear responsibility for himself and for his role in history. It is a criminal role. It is so criminal that revulsion is multiplied by horror.

Terroristic Acts of Despair Alter Nothing in the Stalinist System Itself

In the harshest codices of mankind no suitable punishment can be found for the ruling Moscow clique and, above all, the man who heads it. If, notwithstanding this, we more than once raised in our addresses to the Soviet Youth a voice of warning against individual terrorism which revives so easily on Russia soil soaked as it is with arbitrary rule and violence, it was not for moral but political considerations. Acts of despair alter nothing in

the system itself but merely facilitate for the usurpers bloody reprisals against their adversaries. Even from the standpoint of "vengeance", terrorist blows cannot offer satisfaction. What is the doom of a dozen high bureaucrats compared to the number and scope of the crimes committed by the bureaucracy? The task is to strip the criminals naked before the consciousness of mankind and to cast them into the garbage heap of history.

It is impossible to reconcile oneself to less.

To be sure, the Soviet bureaucracy like that of the Nazis hopes to rule for a thousand years. They are convinced that if regimes fall it is only because sufficiently resolute measures of repression have not been applied. The secret is simple: If every critical head is lopped off in time, it is possible to perpetuate one's rule. During a certain period in which the Soviet bureaucracy was fulfilling a relatively progressive role—in great measure a role that the bureaucracy of capitalism had performed in Western Europe in its day—dizzy successes fell to Stalin's lot. But this period proved to be very brief. Just at the moment when Stalin had become completely imbued with the conviction that his "method" guaranteed victory over all obstacles, the Soviet bureaucracy exhausted its mission and began to corrode even in its very first generation. This is precisely the source whence flow the most recent accusations and trials which to the average philistine appear to have fallen from the clouds.

Stronger or Weaker?

Did Stalin reinforce or weaken his rule by the bloody purge? The answer given by the world press on this point was two-fold and equivocal. The immediate reaction to the Moscow frame-ups was such as to suggest almost to everybody the conclusion that a regime constrained to resort to such machinations cannot be long-lived. But presently the more conservative press, whose sympathies are always assured to the ruling Soviet caste in its struggle against the revolution, made a turn-about-face. Stalin had completely crushed the Opposition, had revamped the G. P. U., eliminated the refractory generals, and during all this the people had remained quiescent. Clearly, therefore, he had reinforced his rule. At first glance each of these two evaluations appears equally convincing. But only at first glance.

The social and political meaning of the purge is clear: The ruling stratum is ejecting from its midst all those who remind it of its revolutionary past, the principles of socialism, liberty, equality, fraternity and the unsolved tasks of the world revolution. The bestiality of the repressions testifies to the hatred which the privileged caste bears to the revolutionists. In this sense the purge increases the homogeneity of the ruling stratum and seems to reinforce Stalin's position.

Bureaucracy Hated

But this reinforcement is essentially spurious in nature. Stalin himself, come what may, is a product of the revolution. His closest clique, the so-called Political Bureau, consists of individuals who are quite insignificant; but the majority of them are connected by their past with Bolshevism. The Soviet aristocracy which has so successfully used the Stalin clique to make short shrift of the revolutionists cherishes no sympathy or respect for the present leaders. It desires to be completely free from all the constraints of Bolshevism, even in the mangled form which

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