

The Trials, Democracy and Communism

Among all the criminal and tragic results of the Moscow trials, there is perhaps none graver than the doubt which they cast in the mind of the masses everywhere upon the whole meaning and ideal of socialism and communism.

How all of the vultures pounce upon this new trial to exploit it in such a way as to extend and deepen this doubt! How all the weaklings, the cowards, the tired radicals, the sweet and treacherous liberals, find comfort in using the trial as an excuse for their own capitulation to reaction!

The liberal New York *Post* sums up for them, well understanding the jewel which Stalin has handed them. On the day of the opening of the trial, its leading editorial was headed: "The Moral Bankruptcy of Bolshevism." The *Post*, of course, does not care in the least how many revolutionists Stalin kills off. It cares, however, a great deal for the chance to utilize what Stalin does to attack the whole conception of communism.

Find a Defense for "Democracy"

The editorial draws its pious lesson: "The Russian experience will help Americans to stick to the liberal way, to set their faces firmly against all 'isms', against all short-cuts to Utopia." Every day it repeats its "lesson". "Every dispatch from Russia deepens and broadens our American love of our wise old democratic system..."

In the *Post's* columns, the disillusioned social-democrat, Eugene Lyons, backs up the editors: "Disgusting moral putrescence is the inevitable end-product of the theory on which the Bolshevik seizure of power rested from the beginning..."

The same theme echoes and re-echoes throughout the press, from reformists to the New York *Times*. They are not slow at following up a lead, these well-skilled hypocrites.

It is "democracy" vs. "dictatorship", they tell us. And what is this "democracy" which they put up as the only alternative to Stalinist dictatorship?

Their "democracy" is, of course, only the polite word for the tyranny, exploitation, unemployment, starvation, insecurity, wars of capitalism. Their "advice" is simply to bow down to imperialism; that is, to bow down to perpetual exploitation, to ever increasing social misery, to the wars and the fascism in which alone imperialism can eventuate.

These Are NOT The Methods of Communism!

They lie and deceive, these moralistic hypocrites. They tell us the same lie that Stalin tells us—that he is the heir to Lenin and the representative of the communist revolution. We hurl back that lie and that deception, from whatever mouth it comes.

The trials are the direct negation of everything for which Bolshevism, Communism, stands and struggles. The methods of the trials are the contradiction of the methods of the Bolsheviks. The answer, the only possible answer to the trials, is the reassertion of the aims and methods of Lenin, of Trotsky, of the October Revolution.

The answer of the *Post* and Lyons is to doom mankind forever to enslavement. The never-ending shame of the supporters of Stalinism is to give their answer a new plausibility.

Our answer to the *Post* and to Lyons, as to Stalin, is to proclaim again the great and deathless ideal of the socialist revolution and the communist society which alone can and will fulfill the needs and aspirations of mankind.

The Trials and the Defense of the U.S.S.R.

In the midst of the horror aroused by the newest and most frightful of the Moscow Trials, revolutionists will not overlook its ominous significance as a symptom of the terrible danger in which the Soviet Union now finds itself. In its turn, the trial itself adds immeasurably to that danger.

How the trial greases the ways for imperialism! What arguments does Stalin give to the imperialist bandits, hungrily looking toward the vast territories and riches of the Soviet Union as potential fields for exploitation!

War Would Be Crusade

The trial makes it possible for the propagandists of imperialism to picture a war against the Soviet Union as a crusade to wipe out a vicious and incredibly depraved tyranny, as a holy war for the "deliverance" of the Soviet people. Already this argument is being carefully prepared in the bourgeois press throughout the world.

The system of the trials is being pictured to the minds of the masses as inseparable from the Soviet Union itself.

In this work, the propagandists of imperialism are ably seconded by the "friends" of the Soviet Union, who, defending the system of the trials, likewise picture them as inseparable from the Soviet Union itself.

Result of "Realism"

Here, then, is another of the results of the "hard-headed Stalinist realism", so much praised by the lovers of the status quo as against the "utopian dreams" of the revolutionists. Stalin's methods, isolating the Soviet Union diplomatically, ever more gravely weakening its internal economic and social structure, at the same time are shattering the moral basis for the defense of the Soviet Union by the masses in-

From the beginning, the revolutionary Marxists have said that the defense of the conquests of the October Revolution must rest fundamentally upon the international working class and upon the extension of the socialist revolution. Only the revolutionary workers can be relied upon to defend the Soviet regime and the social and economic relations established by the Revolution.

Basis For Advance

Stalinism is the destroyer of the revolution, and its regime the vilest despotism in all recorded history. But so mighty were the social conquests of the revolution that even Stalinism has not yet succeeded in wiping them out. The economic and social relations still stand, ready to make possible a great leap forward toward socialism once Stalinism is overthrown and the workers themselves again in control of their own society.

In the face of the trials, all the more imperiously and ardently because of the trials, the revolutionists throughout the world defend the remaining conquests of the revolution against any and all of their enemies. They have not and will not turn over that defense to imperialism.

"Deliverance" To Slavery

The "deliverance" proposed by imperialism is the deliverance of the Soviet people into the clutches of capitalist exploitation, into the hopeless slavery of the frenzied search for profits in the decaying capitalist order.

Let this new trial not turn us aside but be a clarion summons: for the unyielding, uncompromising revolutionary defense of the Soviet Union—against the traitors who stage this unbelievable trial, and against imperialism whose only interest in the trial is in the use to which it can be put toward the final destruction

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Stalin Directs Blows At Revolution Itself; Trial Testimony Crumbles At First Touch

Trials Arouse Protests From Labor Abroad

European Socialist Press Rejects Charges As Totally False

The organized international labor movement has rejected the Moscow charges and "confessions" as false from beginning to end. Protests against the impending judicial murder of the last surviving Old Bolsheviks have gone to Moscow from many quarters.

On March 1 the Labor and Socialist International and the International Federation of Trade Unions wired a protest to Moscow. Recalling that the previous trials had left world opinion completely unconvinced of their veracity, the telegram stated: "We consider it our duty once more to call the attention of the Soviet Government to the prejudice caused by these trials and executions to the cause of the workers of the world."

Leaders Sign

The telegram was signed by Sir Walter Citrine, president of the I.F.T.U., Walter Schevenels, its secretary-general, Louis de Broucker, head of the Second International, and Friedrich Adler, its secretary.

In Paris on March 3, le *Populaire*, Socialist Party organ, described the confessions as "pure lies" and the indictment as a "romantic tale." The Permanent Administrative Committee of the Socialist Party unanimously adopted a resolution to the same effect. The paper also published a denial by Theodore Dan, Russian Menshevik leader, who was implicated by the "confessions" as a German agent. He called the indictment an "odious document."

"Medieval Sorcery"

The Swedish Social-Democratic organ, the *Sozialdemokraten*, on the same day denounced the "medieval sorcery" of the Moscow trials and recalled Prosecutor Vishinsky's White Guard background. The head of the Swedish Confederation of Labor gave an interview expressing the same views.

Attempt To Break Trotsky Defense Committee Fails

In another abortive attempt to disintegrate the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky which has been the principal agency in spreading the truth about the Moscow trials, the *Daily Worker* has spent a great deal of money on long distance telephone calls trying to induce Committee members to resign.

The Stalinist spokesmen are telling the Committee members a story to the effect that the Committee, without authorization, signed their names to an appeal to the United States government to send representatives to the present trial. This story has no basis in fact.

The only statement issued by the Committee, upon authorization of its Executive Board, was an appeal to American workers and friends of the Russian people to save the lives of the 21 defendants, and condemning the new trial as a frame-up, on the basis of the report of the International Commission of Inquiry.

A New York newspaper transferred some of the names from the Committee's letterhead to an excerpt from this press release, which was issued without signa-

Organizers of October



DIEGO RIVERA

Trotsky Reviews Elements of New Trial; Cites Efforts To Gag Him

The following are the first of the daily statements issued to the press by Leon Trotsky in Coyoacan in connection with the new Moscow trial.

By Leon Trotsky

During February of last year at the time of the second Moscow trial (Piatakov-Radek) which was supposed to correct the bad impression of the first trial (Zinoviev-Kamenev), I stated in the press: "Stalin resembles a man who tries to satisfy his thirst with salt water. He will be forced to stage further judicial frame-ups one after the other."

The third Moscow trial has been prepared during a more protracted period and, one must think, more elaborately than the previous ones. The international preparation has been going on during the past few weeks before the eyes of the whole world. The notorious article of Stalin (Feb. 14) about international revolution, striking many with its suddenness, has as its objective the creation of a more favorable atmosphere within the ranks of the working class for the future trial. Stalin wished to tell the workers that if he is shooting the whole revolutionary generation, it is exclusively in the interests of the international revolution. His article does not have any other purpose.

Sedoff's Death Second Step

The death of my son, Leon Sedoff, which continues to remain wrapped in mystery should, until proved to the contrary, be considered as the second act of preparation for the trial: it was necessary at no matter what cost to force into silence an informed and courageous accuser.

The third act in the preparation was the attempt of Mr. Lombardo Tolodano, Laborde, and other Mexican agents of Stalin to force me into silence on the eve of the third trial just as the Norwegian government forced me into silence after the first trial (August, 1936). Such are the main ingredients of the preparation!

The accusation against the 21 defendants is once again published only four days before the trial in order to take public opinion unawares and to hinder the timely delivery of refutations from abroad.

More Important Than Last One

The present trial far surpasses the trial of Radek-Piatakov in the importance of the accused and approaches the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial. In the list of the accused there are no fewer than seven former members of the Central Committee of the party, including Krestinsky, Bukharin, Rykov, former member of the Political Bureau, i. e., the in-

terests the highest power of the Soviet government.

After the death of Lenin, Rykov was the official head of the government for more than five years. From 1918 Bukharin was the editor of the central organ of the party, "Pravda", and from 1926 the official head of the Communist International. Later, after his fall into disfavor, he became the editor of "Izvestia". Rakovsky was the head of the Ukrainian government and later ambassador to London and Paris. Krestinsky, the predecessor of Stalin as secretary of the Central Committee of the party, was afterward ambassador to Berlin for several years. For almost all of the last ten years Yagoda stood at the head of the G.P.U. as Stalin's most trusted henchman and cooked up the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial in its entirety. In the list of the accused there are no fewer than six former members of the Central government.

Stalin Alone Unaccused

Of the nine people who were members of the Political Bureau during Lenin's lifetime, i. e., actual rulers of the fate of the U.S.S.R. there remains only one unaccused, Stalin. All the others have been declared agents of foreign states, and in addition the accusations revert back to 1928 and even to 1918. The Russian White emigres have more than once accused Lenin, myself, and all the other Bolshevik leaders of having achieved the October Revolution at the orders of the German General Staff. At the present time Stalin is trying fully to confirm this accusation.

According to their political tendencies, those of the accused who are known to me, fall into three groups: (a) Bukharin and Rykov, former leaders of the Right Opposition; the third leader of this group, Tomsky, former president of the Soviet Trade Unions, was last year harassed to suicide. From 1923 the Right Opposition found itself in irrevocable struggle against the Left Opposition, the so-called Trotskyists, Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky, shoulder to shoulder with Stalin, carried on the whole campaign of destroying the Left Opposition. (b) The second group is composed of those accused who during a certain time actually belonged to the Left Opposition. Such were Krestinsky, Rosengoltz, who, however, had already gone over to Stalin by 1927, and Rakovsky who returned to the government camp four years ago. (c) The third group insofar as I know it consists either of active Stalinists or non-political specialists.

The Case of Pletnyev

The name of Professor Pletnyev sheds a singular light upon the whole trial. Last year he was arrested on a charge of sexual delinquency. The whole So-

ly. Now Pletnyev has been thrown into a trial of . . . the political opposition. One of the following hypotheses may account for this: either the accusations of sexual delinquency were advanced against him only in order to extort the necessary "confessions" from him; or Pletnyev is actually guilty of sadism but hopes to earn mercy through "confessions" directed against the Opposition. We shall, perhaps, have the opportunity to verify this hypothesis during the trial.

How could Stalin come to this provocation against world public opinion? The answer to this natural question is composed of four elements: (1) Stalin is contemptuous of public opinion. (2) He does not read the foreign press. (3) The agents of the Comintern in all countries report to him only his "victories" over public opinion. (4) Informed people do not dare to reveal the truth to Stalin. He is forced to drink salt water in order to quench his thirst.

February 28, 1938.

Eight Ministers

Yesterday I stated that there were no fewer than seven former members of the central Soviet government sitting on the defendants' bench. Today after more precise study of the names I see that among the accused, not counting the author of these lines, there are eight former Soviet ministers including the former head of the government, Rykov.

Bukharin, devoid of administrative capacity, never became a staff member of the government, but as a member of the Political Bureau and as the head of the Communist International from the time of Zinoviev's fall into disfavor (1926), he occupied a position considerably higher than that of a minister. All these people, it seems, strived for nothing except the humiliation and the dismemberment of the U.S.S.R.!

Kirov Once, More

Apart from the other crimes, about which we will speak in the future, the new defendants are also accused of the murder of Kirov. I recall that Kirov, a Leningrad agent of Stalin, was killed on December 1, 1934, by Nikolaev, a young Communist unknown to anyone, apparently on personal grounds, and in any case, as was evident even from the Soviet accounts, with the direct participation of G.P.U. agents. Immediately after the murder of Kirov, 104 "White Guards", who had supposedly come from abroad in order to commit terrorist acts, were shot without trial.

Although the names of the 104 were not published, it is known that among them were Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Polish Oppositionist members of the Commu-

IS FORCED TO NEW EXTREMES BY CRISIS

Krestinsky "Repudiation" Throws Glaring Light On Methods of G.P.U.; Documentary Evidence Entirely Absent

By MAX SHACHTMAN

Words seem to lose all force and meaning when it comes to describe the latest horror visited upon the Soviet Union and the international labor movement by the Stalinist murder-machine. The Trial of the 21 seems to call less for a political analyst or an historian than for an alienist or expert in psychopathology. Yet, for all its apparent lunacy and gashliness, there is method in it—clumsy, stupid, dastardly method, but method nevertheless.

1. The trial is calculated to allay the seething discontent of the Soviet masses by finding scapegoats for the ruinous effects of the policy followed by the Stalinist regime itself. The bureaucracy wants to escape the responsibility for the crimes it has committed by shifting the blame for all evils upon the defendants and their alleged accomplices.

Finding Scapegoats

In the days of Czarism, the reaction sought to duck the blows of the angry and dissatisfied masses by whipping up a pogrom spirit against the Jews who, according to the Black-Hundred gangs, were really responsible for all the suffering of the people. Under the Stalinist despotism, the place of the Jews is taken by real or fancied Trotskyists, Bukharinists, Zinovievists, Mensheviks, Fascist spies, and in general by anybody and everybody save the ruling clique itself. Under Nicholas the Bloody, the scapegoat Jew was accused of ritual murder and drinking the blood of good Christians. Under Stalin the Bloody, the scapegoat "Trotskyists" are accused of spilling the blood of good Bolsheviks. The system and its aims are identical.

This fact pierces through the very text of the official indictment itself.

Are wages poor? Are they paid irregularly? Are taxes burdensome? Are bank-savings just another means of squeezing down the living standards of the masses? Is the standard of living a horrible legal fiction that leaves deep scars on the purchasing power of the people? These realities, which can no longer be concealed or denied, which were the inevitable product of the policy followed by Stalin's government—have they resulted in widespread discontent among the Soviet population, a discontent which threatens the very foundations of the bureaucracy's power?

Grinko and the Ruble

The answer to all these questions is an emphatic YES! Who is to be held responsible? The Stalinist regime? No; it has a scapegoat that must suffer for its crimes. The former Commissar of Finance, Grinko, is made to assert that he and his "accomplices" worked . . . to weaken the Soviet ruble.

to weaken the financial power of the U.S.S.R., to dislocate Soviet economy, cause dissatisfaction among the population with the financial policy of the Soviet Government, dissatisfaction with taxes, with bad savings bank

service, with delays in payment of wages, etc., for the purpose of causing wide, organized discontentment with the Soviet Government. . . .

Are the masses deprived of such elementary necessities as sugar and butter and eggs? Are the peasants without industrial products for long periods of time? Are state funds embezzled by bureaucrats whose personal lives are one long orgy? Are the consumers despoiled and swindled?

Again the answer is, YES! And it is not the "counter-revolutionary Trotskyists" who have invented these stories because they refuse to believe in the monstrous official lie about an idyllic "socialism" which all the Stalinist sheets from *Pravda* to the *Daily Worker* continue to say exists. It is from Vishinsky's indictment that these facts are drawn and for which it tries to make the scapegoats responsible. It is not the regime, you see, but the hapless defendants who . . . dislocated planning in such commodities as sugar, butter, eggs, tobacco, etc.; deliberately delayed dispatch of goods to the villages, muddled accounts and thus facilitated stealing and squandering of State resources and encouraged the cheating and robbing of consumers."

Stalin's National Policy

Is there growing discontent among the numerous non-Russian peoples who make up the Soviet Union and who are rebelling against the bureaucratic centralism of the Moscow authorities, who are supremely contemptuous of the cultural and political aspirations of the Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Uzbeks and others, and of their rights to autonomy guaranteed by the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet Constitution? Of course there is!

Who is responsible for the situation? The same Stalin whom Lenin, outraged and infuriated, denounced as far back as 1922 for his "out-and-out Great Russian nationalistic campaign" against the Georgians and particularly against the Georgian Bolsheviks, like Mdivani and O. Kudzava, whom Lenin ardently defended and whom Stalin now lists as "Georgian bourgeois nationalists" (he executed them and their friends last year, after a secret trial).

How does the regime answer the sentiments and grievances of the nationalities? By terrorizing them; by the scarcely concealed declaration that they are identical with a fascist plot to dismember the Soviet Union.

2. Bankruptcy Abroad

2. The trial is calculated to serve the new oscillation in Soviet foreign policy and to distract attention from and cover up the calamitous bankruptcy of the Stalin-Litvino course of the past three years. Abandoning the class line and reliance on the

upon the pernicious illusion of a bloc of the "democracies" and the League of Nations against the "fascist aggressors". All his hopes were staked upon cementing an alliance with France, England and the United States against Germany and Japan.