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*World Voices*

*on the*

**MOSCOW  
TRIALS**

*from the*

**LABOR** *AND*

**LIBERAL PRESS**



# World Voices

*on the*

# Moscow Trials

A compilation from the Labor and Liberal  
press of the world

*Published for*  
THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE  
FOR THE DEFENSE OF LEON TROTSKY

22 EAST 17TH STREET  
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*by*



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## CALL FOR THE FORMATION OF THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF LEON TROTSKY

As the climax to a long series of persecutions, Leon Trotsky is today a virtual prisoner in Norway.

The attacks on him have come from diverse quarters. On August 5th a band of Fascists invaded Trotsky's home at Honefoss on the pretext of discovering incriminating evidence of illegal activities.

Soon after came the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial at Moscow and the accusation that Trotsky, in collusion with Hitler's Gestapo, had plotted the assassination of leading Soviet officials.

Trotsky declared these charges to be completely false and contradicted by all the ideas and actions of his forty years of political life. He stated his readiness to appear before an independent commission and present his refutation of the charges.

Submitting to the pressure of a note from the Soviet Foreign Office on the one hand and the campaign of the Norwegian Fascist press on the other—both demanding his expulsion from the country—the Norwegian government replied by interning Trotsky and placing him under a prison regime. Today he is cut off from direct communication with the outside world; deprived of all secretarial assistance; and forbidden to receive mail or newspapers.

Thus Leon Trotsky is deprived of the simplest democratic rights of asylum and is without the necessary means of answering the grave accusations against him. Certainly, the most elementary notions of justice dictate that this world-famous revolutionist should be given the fullest opportunity to state his case.

For this reason we are constituting a Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky to help obtain for him the normal rights of asylum and to aid in the formation of an International Commission of Inquiry, which shall examine all the available evidence and make public its findings.

Support of this appeal in no way necessarily indicates any commitment on the part of the signers to Trotsky's views on politics. However, no great world figure, whatever his point of view, should be subjected to accusations coupled with a virtual incarceration which denies him the right to answer before a neutral body the charges made against him.

We believe that you, as an avowed friend of democratic rights, will wish to join us on this committee. Will you let us know your answer as soon as possible?

NORMAN THOMAS	DEVERE ALLEN
JOHN DEWEY	JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH
FREDA KIRCHWEY	H. M. KALLEN

*New York, N. Y., October 22, 1936.*

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## Introductory Note

The material contained in this pamphlet is drawn from the world's representative liberal and labor press. It has been brought together in order to further the two objectives of the *American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky*—viz., to secure for the great revolutionist the right of political asylum and an opportunity of getting an open hearing. In Europe similar committees have been organized with the same aims, including such figures as H. N. Brailsford and J. F. Horrabin in England, and Jules Romains and Victor Margueritte in France.

One of the most precious liberties enshrined in the American tradition is the freedom to take refuge on these shores from political persecution by foreign governments. The reception given to Louis Kossuth, the career of Carl Schurz and many other revolutionists who fled from Hungary, Germany, Ireland and Russia during the nineteenth century, testify to the strength of this spirit of tolerance and hospitality in American history. Today in many countries of the world the right of political asylum is denied even to those who pledge themselves to refrain from any participation in the political controversies of the land whose hospitality is sought. The extension of this spirit of intolerance is a threat to all lovers of liberty—even to those who owe no allegiance to any political party. That is why the American Committee is interested in securing political asylum for Leon Trotsky. Due in part to its efforts and to the fearless liberalism of the Cardenas administration, Trotsky has for a time found shelter in Mexico.

No individual, and least of all one who has occupied so high a place in the affairs of the world as Leon Trotsky, should be condemned without a public hearing—without an opportunity to answer grave charges made against him. This is an integral part of the American ideal of fair play. But, even more important, it is an elementary prerequisite of any decent administration of justice. The American Committee, which is made up overwhelmingly of individuals who do not share Trotsky's political views, is interested only in the ascertainment of the truth. To achieve this end, it is willing to lend its services to the establishment of an impartial board of inquiry before which Trotsky can give testimony bearing upon the accusations made against him at the Moscow trials. As things stand now, Lenin's greatest collaborator has the same chances of finding impartial judges in Russia as Carl von Ossietzky in Hitler's Germany.

The editorial committee, in selecting the material for this pamphlet, has restricted itself to that segment of liberal, labor or socialist opinion which has no official connection either with the Communist Party or with the Trotskyist groups and which, by virtue of its differences with both, is presumably unbiased. The Committee takes

no stand with regard to the views expressed, but presents this material as evidence that representative men and women of intellectual integrity the world over doubt that justice was done at the Moscow trials. It holds that so long as Trotsky is not heard, justice cannot be done, particularly in view of Trotsky's blanket denial of the charges levelled against him.

In the interest of economy of space, it has been found necessary to omit the republication of two pamphlets which bear upon the Moscow trials. One is *At the Moscow Trial* by D. N. Pritt, a London barrister; the other is *The Witchcraft Trial in Moscow\** by Friedrich Adler, Secretary of the Labor and Socialist International, which contains among other things a detailed reply to Pritt.

As we go to press, newspaper reports on the second series of the Moscow trials are coming in. The contents of the depositions made by Radek, Piatakov and the other men have aroused doubts in their authenticity; doubts that are no less grave than those expressed after the first part of the Moscow tragedy. In due course of time we shall try to make available liberal, labor, and socialist comment on the second trial, as well as on those scheduled to follow. It is clear that logically the key to all of these confessions are the proceedings of the first action against Zinoviev, Kamenev and others. For the credibility we assign to the other trials will depend upon whether we believe that the first one revealed the truth about Leon Trotsky, as the Russian government claims, or whether it was an elaborate frame-up, as Trotsky himself maintains.

In trying to initiate the steps by which the truth may be known, the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky is convinced that it is serving the cause of justice for all men, no matter what their race, religion or class may be. Only those who have something to hide need fear the truth.

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE.

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\*Pioneer Publishers, New York.

# World Voices on the Moscow Trials

## 1

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN WEEKLY  
MANCHESTER, ENGLAND

### The Russian Trial

The Soviet Government has chosen an odd time to hold a great State trial and advertise to the world its persecution mania and its terroristic system. Few but the faithfully blind will take at their face value the charges against Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, and the rest, and regard their "confessions" as honest. And even the faithful will be sorely put to it to explain why, at a moment when they are denouncing (and being exhorted by Moscow to denounce) the bloodthirsty methods of Fascism in Spain, Germany, Abyssinia, Japan, and so on, the Workers' Government should find it politic to follow their example. It will become slightly more difficult for some of our Left-wingers to denounce the Nazis for their proscriptions, their trials and executions for alleged offenses committed years ago, when the mighty Government of the Soviet Union, so firm in its saddle, drags miserable prisoners from their cells to make a public holiday and tries them for new offenses which the omniscient State curiously omitted to discover before. With the best will in the world it is hard not to be cynical about these Russian trials. One can only look for their explanation not in any desire for justice but in the shifts of State policy and the need of an internal diversion. In this case it is the familiar cry of the State in danger, the beloved leader's life hazarded, a foreign Power fomenting assassination. And the scapegoats are the old scapegoats—all the politicians whom Stalin has broken, and who (where speech is not free) are easy victims.

The story is a miserable one. In December, 1934, Kirov, one of Stalin's right-hand men, was assassinated by a Communist. The Government's first action was to put to death over a hundred people who it was not pretended were concerned in the murder. So-called trials were "expedited" all over the place and the occasion taken for a general removal of persons under arrest. This having been done because of "the necessity of strengthening the means of combating terrorism" (as Mr. Maisky explained to British Labor critics), the State investigated the crime. The first accounts put the blame on White Guards instigated, it was alleged, from Latvia and Finland. After a fortnight the Government made the discovery that it was really its old political enemies, the critics of its domestic policy,

who were to blame. The assassin was highly obliging, and there was built up a picture of the underground work of Zinoviev and of the existence of a "conspiratorial counter-revolutionary terrorist group" whose object was to disorganize Stalin's leadership. Trotsky did not enter directly; but it was declared, without much particularization, that the conspirators were following out his ideas. Nor were Zinoviev and Kamenev—brought out from their political obscurity—accused of more than indirect participation. It was not alleged that they gave their consent to the murder of Kirov, only, as Zinoviev said in his abject confession, that they had "moral responsibility" because their actions "could not but promote the degeneration of these rogues by the creation of a terroristic frame of mind." So Zinoviev and Kamenev were spared the supreme penalty, a recognition that they had been virtually impotent since their fall nine years before, and a concession, perhaps, to their having belonged to the "Old Guard" of Lenin's close associates. No organized conspiracy had been proved; only, at best, the existence of internal discontent, and a tendency to voice it.

Now, eighteen months later, the story is retold, with new trimmings. Fresh characters appear; almost every Communist leader who has passed out of favor is held up as a potential murderer. The Latvian Consul with his five thousand roubles vanishes into the background and the Gestapo and thirteen thousand Czech crowns come in. Trotsky, the pathetic wandering exile, harried by ill-health and reluctant hosts, appears as the cunning accomplice of the German Secret Police. And, crowning infamy, a gentleman is found who intended to shoot Stalin but, happily, was given a seat rather too far away. Once again the narratives are complete, the confessions of the accused abject, their guilt handsomely acknowledged. But so also were the narratives and confessions and admissions in January, 1935. It is strange that such material parts of the story were then unknown, and still stranger that important events in it did not take place until months after the earlier trial. What kernel of truth there may actually be is hard to guess; that the Nazi Gestapo has fished in Russia's troubled waters is extremely probable, although from everything we know of Trotsky and the principal accused it is highly unlikely that they have intrigued with their country's greatest foe. Still, one supposes, the trial will go according to plan, and the death sentences for which the State-controlled Moscow press is clamoring will be pronounced. It is earnestly to be hoped that they will not be executed, that the Soviet Government will be content with its melodrama and not stain itself with what the outside world could only regard as political murder. It is well to speak plainly. Though every act of the Soviet State finds its British apologists who imagine that criticism of it springs from capitalist original sin, it needs only common sense to see that State political executions at this moment must do immense harm to Russia's credit in the world and encourage

and strengthen her enemies. Russia's judicial system is not our business, but her good name as an ally of the forces of peace and of government based on social justice matters immensely. With what conviction can the democratic countries develop a common front with Soviet Russia against reaction if she descends to the methods of barbarism of the Fascist world? Western Europe is now bewildered with mendacious stories of a "Red" terror. How better can belief in them be propagated than by the exhibition that in the one Socialist State itself that terror is a horrible reality?

*August 21, 1936.*

## A State Blunder

The Stalinite dictatorship has taken its revenge. The shooting of sixteen prisoners is no more than a drop in the bucket of terrorism, but it is different from any of the previous mass executions in Russia since 1921. Stalin has got rid of two men whose careers in the Bolshevik party were as long as his, who had been joint actors in the October Revolution, who had shared with him the confidence of Lenin, and who with him succeeded to the leadership of the State after Lenin's death. It had been thought that their part in making the Soviet State would have preserved these old colleagues. That they should have been shot after such a farcical trial and that the occasion should be taken to institute a new purge against the remaining members of the old guard of the Revolution suggests that there is a strong element of vindictiveness in Stalin's character. He surrounds himself with men of his own making and devotes all the power of the State to removing those who, however, remotely, might become rival centers of authority. It could have been argued a year or two ago that the so-called "Trotskyists" represented a real opposition movement, that they were the heirs of the aggressive internationalism of the first phase of the Revolution as against Stalin's refusal to consider the export value of Communism and his concentration on domestic policy. But the opposition has been pretty firmly repressed, especially since the last purge eighteen months ago. Whatever the reasons, whether to encourage the others, or to feed a scare against Germany (the intervention of whose secret agents is one of the few probabilities in the affair), or to rouse a wave of popular feeling for Stalin in order to cover up the burdens of new sacrifices for armaments, or to prepare the way for the new (democratized!) Constitution, the trial and its result are a bad business. The Russian Government has given itself an evil name and weakened its influence for peace in the world.

*August 28, 1936.*

## The Trials and Executions in Moscow

By Theodore Dan

The following letter, published on September 4, 1936, was written by the leader of the Russian Social Democratic (Menshevik) Party who is also a member of the Bureau of the Socialist and Labor International.

*To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian:*

Sir—Sixteen men have been shot in Moscow and one, Tomskey, menaced and hounded into suicide. Among the sixteen were Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov, Mrachkovsky, the most noted of the fellow-workers of Lenin, co-founders of the Bolshevik party and the international Communist movement, men who led the Bolshevik revolution and during its heroic period filled the highest posts in the Soviet State and in the party and trade union organizations. The turn of other Bolshevik leaders no less prominent, men who have held high positions in the State and the army—Radek, Bukharin, Rykov, Piatakov, Sokolnikov, Serebriakov—has still to come. Everyone who at any time played a leading part in the Bolshevik party is awaiting his fate in fear and horror. Even those nearest to Stalin feel insecure.

Stalin is not content even with having the old party leaders shot; he is having them covered with infamy—and with them the leader who is now out of his reach, Trotsky, the actual organizer of the October rising, of the Red Army, and of the victories in the civil war. If one is to believe the court and the Soviet press, the men who were the making of the Bolshevik party and of international Communism, and who led the Bolshevik revolution, were nothing but blackguards and thieves, spies and mercenaries of Hitler and the Gestapo!

But did there really exist a terrorist conspiracy against Stalin among the old Bolshevik leaders? It is only too natural that terrorist ideas should simmer in many a hot head in a country in which every opportunity is lacking of organized peaceful opposition to the arbitrary "totalitarian" omnipotence of a single person. But one may well suspect that these hot heads would not be found on the shoulders of old and experienced politicians, who, as Marxists, had for many a year strongly condemned terrorism, if only on account of its futility. The suspicion becomes a certainty when one examines the case for the prosecution and the reports of the Soviet press on the proceedings. There is not a single document, not a single definite piece of evidence, not a single precise detail of the alleged plans of assassination, not a single attempt to reconcile the conflicting statements made, and only two "witnesses," both brought into court from prison and both due to appear themselves as defendants in the

"second" terrorist trial before the same court! There is nothing but malevolent phrases in general terms and, most incredible of all, the most abject of self-vilification and "confessions" on the part of the accused men, once more without any concrete detail of any sort concerning their "crime"; they fairly enter into competition with the State prosecutor in branding themselves, and actually beg for the death penalty.

But why is Stalin thus getting rid of the old party leaders on the very eve of the enactment of the new Constitution, with all its democratic flavor? Why is he breaking, at this particular moment, the bonds that still unite him with the old traditions and the past history of the Bolshevik party, the international Communist movement, and the Bolshevik revolution, as Napoleon once broke with the Jacobins from among whom he had risen to power?

In spite of all the democratic rights granted to Soviet citizens by the new Constitution Stalin intends to be in a position to make it a serviceable instrument of the consolidation of his personal dictatorship. For there is one right that is still denied the Soviet citizen—the right of free political self-determination and free organization in general, without which all other rights can easily be rendered valueless. The political monopoly and the leadership in all permitted organizations and all State and municipal bodies, and therewith the disposal of the press, of the right of assembly, and so on, remains in the hands of the Communist party which Stalin has politically emasculated; in other words, it remains constitutionally reserved to Stalin himself.

But he still has to face the danger that certain provisions of the new Constitution, above all, the secrecy of the ballot, may become buttresses for a legal struggle of the working masses for their rights—above all, for the right of free organization. For that reason he is urgently at work now making "innocuous" all those who are in a position to organize this mass struggle. He is sending Social Democrats wholesale into his concentration camps. And he is hurriedly exterminating the last of the old Bolshevik leaders whose names and whose opposition to him are known to the masses and who could thus become particularly dangerous to him in his peaceful and constitutional struggle for his sole dominance.

If the Soviet Union is to be preserved as the nucleus of peace, and the war peril facing all humanity thus exorcised, all friends of the Russian Revolution and of world peace must stand resolutely on the side of the Russian workers and peasants in order to assist them to defend the possibilities of democratic and Socialistic development of the Soviet Union against the nationalistic and Bonapartist policy of Stalin. The Moscow murders are perhaps one of the final warnings.—Yours, etc.

*Paris, August 28.*

## The Russian Purge

The following letter, published on September 11, 1936, was written, according to an editorial note "by a correspondent with a close knowledge of political conditions in Soviet Russia."

*To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian:*

Sir—With Kamenev, Zinoviev, Smirnov, etc., there disappear the last of the Russian Communists, the last of the Old Guard companions of Lenin, the last of the Marxists in Russia. There is little doubt that the execution of all the surviving members of the original Polit-Bureau which created the Soviet State is meant by Stalin to convince the doubting capitalistic world of the sincerity of his abandonment of Bolshevism and of the reality of Russia's National Socialism.

What we have for years past been witnessing in Russia is a counter-revolution from within and the destruction of Communism by those who still pay it lip-service. For the past decade Stalin has been busy discarding all the principles and practices of Socialism in the internal organization of the country. Tomsy fell when he protested against the trade unions being deprived of every vestige of power or right to protect the workers. Today anyone can be dismissed at the whim of the manager or director of the factory without being able to appeal to his trade union or to anyone else. With dismissal he frequently loses also his room and finds his family homeless, whilst the passport system prevents his seeking work in another town. At the same time preferment, the obtaining of decent living accommodation, of a place in a rest home or sanatorium, all depend mainly on the favor of the factory director or office chairman. Accordingly everyone does his best by flattery and toadyism to keep in the good graces of his boss at any cost to his self-respect or principles. The factory director or office chairman, who can treat his workers as serfs without political or economic rights, is in the same position towards his superior, the chairman of the trust, whilst the latter in his turn trembles before the Commissar as the Commissar trembles before Stalin and the O.G.P.U. In Russia today as under the Tsars no one is secure, each petty tyrant is himself a slave.

Lenin realized that since all positions of responsibility were to be held by Communists it was of vital importance to keep the party free of self-seeking men without principles who would enter for the material benefits they could obtain. Accordingly he instituted the party maximum—i.e., no Communist could receive more than 275 roubles a month, although many of the non-party specialists (engineers, etc.) under the Communists received much more. Stalin, as soon as he had exiled Trotsky, abolished the party maximum first in

practice and a few years ago also in theory. First he arranged for special supplies of food and clothing at exceedingly low prices for all persons holding responsible positions, and raised the party maximum to a higher figure. Then when a year or so ago these "closed shops" were abolished he put an end to the party maximum altogether, and gave salaries of 1,500, 2,000, and even 3,000 roubles to the Communists who form the upper ranks of the bureaucracy. Since 300 roubles is a high wage for workers and few non-party specialists receive more than 600 or 700, and since the higher bureaucrats still enjoy their free motor-cars, country houses, special rest homes, etc., the division between rich and poor grows ever wider. In this way Stalin has created a bureaucracy with a vested interest in the continuation of his government, and moreover has made sure that no leading party members will go against his "line" however violently he outrages all the tenets of Bolshevik theory.

Today the members of the Communist party have just as strong a vested interest in the present organization of Russian society as the capitalist class in other countries has in the continuation of capitalism. So long as a leading party member remains a good "yes man" he is assured of a high standard of life, a position of great authority, the best schools for his children—in a word, of all the luxuries of an aristocracy. So long as the minor party members cling firmly to the "general line of the party," that is, Stalin's line, they have the hope of eventually obtaining all these privileges when they rise to the top of the party ladder.

Those who cannot be reconciled either by chauvinistic propaganda concerning the present power and greatness of Russia or bribed by positions of power and privilege are kept from grumbling by fear for their families. There is some astonishment in England at the "confessions" of the men on trial. Although their lives may have been promised to them if they should confess it is more probable that they were mainly concerned for their families. Kamenev at least made this perfectly clear when he said in court that "although dying a criminal traitor" he hoped that his wife and three children, "whose joyous lives he had ruined," would follow the "Stalinist Communist path." Men who might have resisted in spite of long solitary confinement, constant questioning, despair, and the tricks of agents provocateurs, are brought to make abject confessions when threatened with reprisals on their wives and children. According to Soviet law the families of any Soviet citizen who escapes abroad or stays abroad are liable to ten years' imprisonment. This law refers not to accused persons but to those who dare to wish to live elsewhere than in Russia. Making a man's family suffer for his crimes is an accepted practice in Russia and explains much of what appears incomprehensible to the foreign observer. Those whose abject confessions are read in court to make a public holiday hope to save their families from

prison or destitution even if they have little hope of saving their own lives.

It is impossible not to see that Stalin, starting off to prove that Socialism could be built in one country (against all Marxist and Leninist theory that Socialism must be international if it is to be Socialism), has succeeded in bringing forth a hybrid monster which is neither capitalism nor Socialism, which preserves all the worst features of the former and gives none of the benefits expected from the latter.

If the Socialist reacts from the picture of the U. S. S. R. to follow Trotsky, who still holds aloft the battered banner of world revolution, he must believe that Russia has not been forced along the road to a kind of Tsarist-Fascism by historical necessity but by Stalin. But the Marxist cannot accept this explanation of history in terms of the influence of individuals. He must agree that Russia has become National Socialist instead of Communist of necessity, and that Stalin would have won even if Lenin had lived. The unhappy paradox which faces the Marxist is that the materialist interpretation of history leads him to reject Marx's prophecy of the future. The increasing interdependence of countries has led not to international Socialism, as Marx thought it would, but to a violent attempt by States to do away with that interdependence. The U. S. S. R. first showed the road to autarchy or "National Socialism." Germany followed next. Whether every country must follow this road and in so doing come under the same kind of soul-destroying dictatorship as that of Stalin and Hitler remains to be seen.

If democracy must disappear because it is incompatible with the required economic reorganization of society, then we are about to enter a period of history in which the horrors of the barbarian invasions or of the religious wars of the seventeenth century will pale into insignificance.—Yours, etc.,

J. K. B.

*August 28, 1936.*

NEW STATESMAN AND NATION  
LONDON, ENGLAND

## The Moscow Trial

The confessions of Zinoviev and Kamenev are too abject and too well staged to be convincing. Trotsky, in exile an increasingly bitter enemy of the Stalin regime, denounces the whole trial as a fraud and denies having engaged in any kind of political activity in Russia. On the face of it the story of the plot to assassinate Stalin and install Trotsky in his place seems, for many reasons, unlikely. Such a plot could have little chance of success; the G. P. U. is extremely efficient as well as ruthless, and Stalin would seem to be more firmly than ever established in the saddle. His policy of "Socialism in one country" as opposed to Trotsky's policy of stirring up revolution in outside states would seem, at least from the Russian point of view, to have been fully justified and is certainly accepted as a success by the mass of Russian citizens. But there is, of course, another side. In any dictatorship there are intrigues, and the murder of Kirov was a reminder that Stalin is not immune from the ordinary risks of dictatorship. Since that murder every element of discontent in Russia has been described as Trotskyism and connected in the minds of the rulers of Russia with the foreign Trotskyist movement which reached considerable proportions in pre-Hitler Germany, is active now in France and the United States, and had a small following—and only a small following—in Spain. But we doubt whether Zinoviev and Kamenev could possibly have been conspiring with those revolutionaries abroad who accept the theories put forward in articles by Trotsky. The real puzzle is why the G. P. U., which has long been preparing this trial, should have been permitted to hold it at the present juncture. A commonly advanced and not impossible reason is that they wished to show their importance and activity before the introduction of the new constitution which may curb their power.

*August 22, 1936.*

## 6

### The Soviet Purge

The execution of all the sixteen prisoners in the Soviet treason trial followed promptly on their conviction. With Zinoviev and Kamenev there disappear two others who played a part only a little less distinguished in the early years of the revolution, Smirnov and the general head of the civil war, Mratchkovsky. Tomsy, formerly the head of the trade unions and later of the State Publishing Concern, shot himself to escape a less honorable fate. Of the original revolutionary executive of the Bolshevik Party only Stalin is now left alive and in power. Bukharin and Radek, accused in the dock by some of the prisoners, are under suspicion, while Sokolnikov, formerly ambassador in Paris and London, is in prison. The purge goes on upon a great scale throughout the party in the provinces. The trial, if one must trust the available reports, was wholly unconvincing. The accused had no counsel, and the evidence consisted solely of confessions worthless in the circumstances. That part of the opposition at one time grouped around Trotsky may have continued to plot is quite possible. But it is hard to believe that all these orthodox Bolsheviks broke the first rule of the party by planning terrorism and assassination, and even more unlikely that they conspired with the Nazi secret police. Zinoviev and Kamenev, under a cloud since 1927, several times in exile and prison and all the time under surveillance, would have been reckless heroes if they had gone on plotting; and that was never the reputation of these particular revolutionaries. The worst interpretation is that the Soviet Political Police vamped up this conspiracy to perpetuate its power on the eve of the adoption of a quasi-democratic constitution. The truth is unknown. There may well have been a plot. But the disadvantages of these methods of justice, coupled with unconvincing confessions and broadcast propaganda, is that they reflect among those who retain any integrity of judgment, at least as much upon the State which employs them as upon the victims it condemns.

*August 29, 1936.*

## CONTROVERSY: "A MONTHLY FORUM FOR SOCIALIST DISCUSSION"

### Were They Guilty?

By F. W. Chandler

Dr. F. W. Chandler, by profession a medical man, is in his leisure hours a historian. Author of "Political Spies and Provocative Agents," a remarkable exposure of the British Government's use of spies against the working classes from the Napoleonic Wars to Invergordon. A member of the British Socialist Party from 1906 until it merged into the Communist Party. Since then has not belonged to any political party.



#### AMERICAN POLICE METHODS

"Whatta ya mean ya got him to confess? That's the guy that made the complaint!"

"Judge," New York.

That's a funny picture; but it has a serious implication to anyone who has read the "Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement," of the "National Commission on Law Observance," U. S. A., July, 1931.

Here are a few extracts: "Confessions of guilt obtained through intolerable pressure may be false. William III tried the thumb-screws on his own thumbs, and said another turn would make him confess anything."

"Historically the main basis for the rule excluding an enforced confession is the danger of its falsity. The first person to get the benefit of that rule in England had, under promise of pardon, confessed to murder. The victim later turned up alive."

"In a well-known Vermont case in 1819, the two Boorn brothers, after much solicitation, made detailed confessions of murder. They were convicted, and one of them was awaiting execution when the 'murdered man' was discovered in New Jersey wandering around in a fit of amnesia."

"The following case was related to us by a former prosecuting attorney: 'A woman was murdered by being sandbagged. Her hus-

band was suspected. Then I heard that an Italian boy, who had been in the State penitentiary on a felony charge and was out, had been picked up and confessed. I went to police headquarters. The third-degree room was 8 by 12, furnished by two broken chairs, an old table, some file cases. As I entered the outer room I saw a policeman leaving this room. I heard a loud outcry and entered. I saw a young man kneeling on the floor, with his hands joined and lifted, crying aloud to God to answer his prayer for help. He was saying, "You know, God, I didn't do it. I had nothing to do with it. A girl got me to say this, to help out a detective. They wouldn't believe me now. I am telling truth. I have got to go to the chair for something I didn't do."

"I interfered, sent the detective out, and questioned the young man myself. I examined him. He had been beaten over the kidneys. On one side were three red marks, on the other one large red mark, and he was weak and in great pain, as from a body beating. He told me: "They are trying to kill me. They have made me confess to something I didn't do. I was still in prison at the time the crime was committed, and you will prove it if you will check the dates." I did so, and found the young man was telling the truth—he had actually not been released from prison at the time the woman was murdered. His story was that a girl, whom he knew, had fallen under the power of a detective, who was using her for his own purposes, and that she had, under pressure from this detective, persuaded him to confess. The essential fact was, they were torturing a man who had a singularly perfect alibi, and they knew it."

The worthlessness, as evidence, of confessions extracted under compulsion, has been demonstrated hundreds of times. Here are a couple of illustrations from Jardine.

"A German soldier charged with robbing his officer, who was tortured repeatedly in order to force him to reveal what had become of the stolen property, under torture accused himself and others of many crimes and even of murders which had never been committed."

And shortly before the Revolution in 1793, the Parliament of Paris suspended two Judges from their office who had ordered the execution of a man for the alleged murder of a woman, proved only by his own confession under torture—the woman being discovered alive within two years after the execution of the supposed murderer.

Torture as a legal means of extracting evidence is a part of our inheritance from ancient Rome. It was a common practice in the days of the Republic; though, as Blackstone says, "its uncertainty as a test and criterion for truth was elegantly pointed out by Tully: though he lived in a state wherein it was usual to torture slaves in order to furnish evidence: 'Nature sets a limit to what mind and body can bear; between fear of further torture and hope of release, there is no room for truth.'" And Cicero was not the only Roman writer to denounce the practice.

It was an essential part of procedure under the Empire. "The Digest of Justinian" lays down a long list of rules for its application.

From Rome it passed into nearly every country in Europe, until the 18th century, when it was legally abolished in most countries.

A Statute of Queen Anne declares that "no person accused of any capital offense or other crime in Scotland shall be subject or liable to any torture." Jardine, in "The Use of Torture in the Criminal Law of England," says that "in England, though it is not expressly forbidden by any Act of Parliament, there is no instance of its application subsequently to the Commonwealth. Anterior to the Commonwealth," he goes on to say, "torture was always used as a matter of course in all grave accusations, at the mere discretion of the King and the Privy Council, and uncontrolled by any law besides the prerogative of the Sovereign."

Sir Thomas Smith, Secretary to Queen Elizabeth, writes, in "Commonwealth of England": "Torment or question which is used by the order of the civile law and custome of other countries, to put a malefactor to excessive paine to make him confesse of himself or of his fellowes or complices, is not used in England. It is taken for servile. For how can he serve the Commonwealth after as a free man who hath his body so haled and tormented? And if he been not found guilty, what amends can be made him? And if he must dye, what crueltie is it so to torment him before! The nature of Englishmen is to neglect death, to abide no torment; and therefore hee will confesse rather to have done anything—yea, to have killed his own father, than to suffer torment."

Yet Jardine gives a number of instances of the use of torture for this purpose during Elizabeth's reign, some of which make horrible reading; in 1577, "orders are given to the Lieutenant of the Tower to place the prisoner in the 'dungeon among the rats,' if he does not answer willingly: a cell below high-water mark and totally dark; and as the tide flowed, innumerable rats, which infest the muddy banks of the Thames, were driven through the orifices of the walls into the dungeon."

Sherington's irons (the Scavenger's Daughter) was considered a mild form of torture, and among the "gentler tortures" was the tying of the victim's thumbs together and suspending him by them to a beam, while the questions were repeated to him.

Jardine, writing in 1837, says "at the present day the practice of torture has wholly disappeared from the criminal procedure of every European nation." That, however, was said nearly 100 years before Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin; and before the report of the American Commission.

The 16 prisoners, accused of conspiracy to murder Stalin, were sentenced to death at 2:30 A.M., August 24, 1936.

Were they guilty? The case is loaded with improbabilities. They were convicted on the evidence of their own confessions, obtained from them by the OGPU before the trial; and the OGPU knows all the tricks of the third degree.

Why did they not retract their confessions when in court?

Broken fragments of manhood; hemmed in, as they were, by bayonets; torn between the fear of further torture and the last glimmer of hope of release—each individual had a promise that his life would be spared, on condition that he adhered to his confession.

In 1553, the Duke of Northumberland, under sentence of death, "had a promise made him of a pardon; yea, though his head were on the block, on condition that he would recant, and hear Mass. On which promise he firmly relied, and did what was required; and still borne up with the same hope, on the scaffold denied, in word and outward profession," etc. See Cobbett's State Trials, Vol. I.

After the sentence, the 16 were not given much opportunity to withdraw their confessions; at dawn, August 25, it is officially reported, they were all shot, including the inevitable stool-pigeons.

Why shoot the stool-pigeons? Dead men tell no tales.

And why did Tomsky shoot himself? Not because he had plotted to kill Stalin, but because Stalin was plotting to kill Tomsky, after screwing out of him a false confession.

*London, October, 1936.*

NEW LEADER  
(OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE INDEPENDENT LABOR PARTY)  
LONDON, ENGLAND

## Trotsky and the Soviet Trial

### Demand for Investigation by the Working Class

It is impossible without further investigation to accept as authentic much of the evidence given at the Moscow Trial against Trotsky. In a desperate effort to win the commendation of Soviet authorities and to snatch at a faint hope of reprieve, the prisoners obviously sought to serve one of the chief purposes of the trial by mounting up charges against the ex-leader of the Red Army. Few will believe, for example, that Trotsky acted in conjunction with the Nazi Secret Service of Germany.

It is significant that the two prisoners who acknowledged themselves to be Trotskyists were the only two who did not voice repentance. One of them cried: "Long live the Leninist Party" even as the death sentence was pronounced.

Both these prisoners, whilst admitting that Trotsky had encouraged opposition to the Stalin policy within the Russian Communist Party, denied that he had ever done anything to encourage terrorism or a conspiracy against the life of Stalin or the Soviet leaders.

An impartial observer will naturally tend to believe the prisoners who maintained their attitude at the trial rather than those who denied their convictions.

Trotsky's record in the Revolutionary Movement demands that the matter should not be left where it is.

He has asked for the appointment of a Commission of Investigation by the Norwegian Labor Government into the charges brought against him in Norway by the Fascists and the Communists.

*We think it is the duty of the International Working-class Movement to appoint a Commission of Investigation. It should visit Trotsky in Norway, and also ask permission to visit Moscow and examine the evidence given in the trial. It should also obtain evidence from Trotskyist refugees from Soviet Russia.*

The Soviet authorities ought not to resist such a proposal. When well-known Russian Social Democrats were tried in 1921 they permitted Emile Vandervelde, of the Second International, to act in their defense.

Meanwhile the Norwegian Labor Government should not give way to the clamor in Nazi and Communist circles for the expulsion of Trotsky from Norway. His service to the Russian Revolution and the whole Working-class movement stand, and he cannot be condemned merely by the doubtful proceedings of the Moscow trial. Only an impartial international investigation can settle this question.

*August 28, 1936.*

## Trotsky's Fate His Position in Norway

The Moscow trial and the execution of the sixteen prisoners continues to arouse concern in the Working-class Movement.

Meanwhile Trotsky has been placed under conditions of severe restrictions in Norway by the Labor Government, owing to his refusal to desist from propaganda.

The Soviet Government has demanded his expulsion from Norway, but the Government (although it previously gave him until December 18 to leave the country) has declined to agree to this demand.

*Irrespective of one's views about Trotsky's convictions and actions, his fight for liberty of political propaganda (assuming that it is not of a terroristic character) is important. The Revolutionary Movement is international, and revolutionists must resist developments which would have the effect of silencing refugees once they are excluded from the country of their birth.*

Finally, one must comment upon the Communist propaganda against Trotsky in this country. The articles in the "Daily Worker" are more calculated to make "Trotskyists" quickly than all the propaganda of Trotsky. The discovery that Trotsky was a "dud" even when he was the organizer and leader of the victorious Red Armies, and that he was always a "twister" can convince no one who knows his record, and serve only to show how hard put the Communists are to explain and justify what happened in Moscow.

September 4, 1936.

## The Moscow Executions

By Otto Bauer

The author of this article is the well-known Austrian Socialist, who played a leading part in the revolt against the rise of Fascism in Vienna.

For some considerable time the warnings in the Soviet Press have been increasing; opponents of the Party had insinuated themselves into the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A "rotten Liberalism" on the part of the leading organs of the party was tolerating their activities. The greatest vigilance against the enemies with party membership books was necessary. These warnings showed that the opposition within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which seemed almost to have disappeared since the tremendous economic successes achieved by the work of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, had begun to increase again.

The Soviet Government is working with the greatest energy to increase the productivity of labor in Soviet industry at a bound. State subsidies are being withdrawn from the industrial undertakings, and they are thereby being compelled to reduce their costs of production. The Stakhanoff movement has given a powerful impulse to the fight for a rapid and considerable increase in the productivity of labor. The norms of production, on the basis of which piece-work rates and bonuses are fixed, have been revised. The majority of the Russian workers have been able to increase their money wages to a considerable extent by considerably increasing their output. But a part of the working class—one-third or one-fourth—either in consequence of their low capacity for work or in consequence of the less perfect technic and organization of production in their factories, are unable to adapt their performances to the new norms, and in consequence their money wages have perceptibly fallen. The inequality in the development of the wages of labor produces embitterment. This embitterment makes itself felt in the party cells as well. It prepares a field for opposition.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union and the Comintern have revised the whole of their policy under the pressure of the danger of war. The policy of alliances and the League of Nations policy pursued in association with capitalist powers, the policy of the United Front and the People's Front, the approaches to the European middle classes and intellectuals, the sacrifice of the specifically proletarian

class privileges and of the specific Soviet election law in the new draft constitution—the whole of this necessary development is in such contradiction to the Bolshevik Party tradition that it was bound to encounter resistance among the members of the party who are attached to tradition, and to awaken opposition.

Five years ago, at a time when the carrying out of the first Five Year Plan demanded the most terrible sacrifices from the masses of the people, Stalin strangled all the opposition in the ranks of his own party with a chain of tendentious political trials. He has once again decided to intimidate and cut down the reviving opposition in his own ranks by the same expedients. This is evidently the purpose and meaning of the terrible trial in Moscow.

I never had any sympathy for Zinoviev; I have always considered him to be one of those mainly responsible for the disruption of the world working-class movement. I have no sympathy for Trotsky's present policy; I regard it as being thoroughly sectarian. But whatever we may think of the men whom Stalin wanted to destroy by this trial, and in so far as they were within his reach did break morally and destroy physically, can we really believe that these men have committed the crime with which they were charged?

At the Marseilles Congress of the Labor and Socialist International we put forward the thesis that no Socialist may employ or support methods of force against Bolshevism in the Soviet Union, as any forcible overthrow of the Soviet Government could only lead to a victory for the White counter-revolution. In the struggle on behalf of this theory the Russian Mensheviki supported us unequivocally, determinedly and passionately. And are we supposed to believe that Russian Communists, that a man like Trotsky, the organizer of the October Revolution and the victory in the civil war; that men like Zinoviev and Kamenev, Lenin's closest collaborators, men whom Lenin regarded as his nearest persons of trust even after his conflict with them in 1917, whom he placed in the most important and most responsible positions in the Soviet State—the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International—are we to believe that these men desired to combat and overthrow the Soviet Government and the leaders of the Communist Party by the method of murder?

The Soviet Union is seriously menaced by Hitlerite Germany. Anyone who desired in such a situation to disorganize its political and military leadership by the methods of individual terrorism, would commit high treason not only against the Soviet Union, not only against the Communist Party, but also against world Socialism altogether, without distinction of parties and tendencies. And are we to believe that Trotsky, the creator of the Red Army, that Zinoviev, President of the Leningrad Soviet and the Communist International, thanks to Lenin's confidence; that Kamenev, through Lenin's confidence, President of the Soviet Congress during the October Revolution, President of the Moscow Soviet, of the Council

for Labor and Defense, Vice-President of the Soviet Government, had organized in association with Hitler's Gestapo individual terrorism against the political and military leaders of the Soviet Union?

Even more! On the basis of the evidence of the defendants in the Moscow trial, the public prosecutor has also caused an investigation to be opened against Bukharin, Rykov, Radek, Uglianov, Piatakov, Sokolnikov and Serebriakov. One of those threatened by the new investigation, Tomskey, the organizer of the trade unions of the Soviet Union, has anticipated the result of the inquiry by suicide. Are we really to regard it as conceivable that the whole staff of leaders which gathered around Lenin and organized the October Revolution under Lenin's leadership, conducted the civil war to victory and founded the Soviet power, consisted of nothing but counter-revolutionary conspirators?

Where are the proofs of these monstrous accusations? The proofs consist simply and solely in the confessions of the defendants. These defendants did not confess under the weight of witnesses' evidence and documents which could have been put forward against them. No, they confessed what could not be proved by any document or the evidence of any witness. They almost fell over each other to make their confessions. They did not adduce any extenuating circumstances for themselves, but explained their actions solely by a personal lust for power and accused themselves of deceitful concealment, of murder, of relations with the Gestapo and of treachery to the working class and Socialism. Any public prosecutor in the world would desire to have defendants so eager to confess. In tendentious political trials in the Soviet Union, however, such eagerness to confess has not been seen for the first time. How can we explain it? Are we to believe that these astonishing confessions were true? Or must we assume that the defendants confessed what they were wanted to confess in the vain hope of being able to save their lives in that way alone?

Nothing disturbed me so much during the trial as the evidence of a man whom I knew very well and of whom I had a high opinion. I knew Rakovsky when he was still at the head of the Rumanian Social Democratic Party. I knew Rakovsky's courageous attitude during the world war and what he achieved during the civil war. After he had served the Soviet Government in the highest post he, persecuted as a supporter of Trotsky, refused far longer and more courageously than other Trotskyists to submit to the rulers. Now, during the trial, Rakovsky published an article in the *Pravda* in which, beginning with a tribute to Stalin, he reviled Trotsky and the defendants as traitors, blackguards and allies of fascism, assumed their association with the Gestapo as proved by asserting that he was ashamed of once having belonged to Trotsky's circle, and closed with the demand: "These must be shot!" I knew Rakovsky to be a man who was sound and full of character. Does this sagacious man also

believe that the confessions on which the indictment was based are true? Or has his anxiety about the omnipotence of the dictatorship over body and soul so broken the character of this man who was once so full of character that he reviles his old friends against his better knowledge and cries for the shooting of his old comrades in arms?

Mystery upon mystery! But however these astounding confessions by the accused are interpreted, the result is in both cases equally terrible.

If these confessions are true, then the closest friends and collaborators of Lenin, the organizers of the October Revolution and of the civil war, the highest dignitaries of the Soviet State, the Communist Party and the Communist International, were men who were capable of allying themselves with the Gestapo with a view to murder, and who therefore were capable of any crime. But if the confessions are false, what kind of light is cast upon the fact of such confessions by old revolutionaries who make such confessions out of fear, upon a system of justice which extorts such confessions and upon the shooting of the condemned men?

Is not Moscow aware of the terrific and staggering moral problems which this trial has raised?

The Communist International is appealing for a united front of the proletarian parties, for a People's Front to unite the working class parties in all countries with the anti-fascist and anti-war forces of the lower middle classes and the peasantry. Is it not understood in Moscow how greatly the moral horror aroused by this trial, however it is regarded, and the subsequent shootings, strengthens all the obstacles to the policy of the united front and the People's Front and strengthens all the opponents of this policy?

The Soviet Government has sought the support of the best intellectuals of Europe with great success. Is Moscow so out of touch with the mentality of western Europe that it is not aware of the horror which this trial and the subsequent shootings were bound to arouse among the best of the European intelligentsia who are most susceptible to influence on behalf of growing Socialism?

The draft of the new constitution for the Soviet Union justified the hope that the Soviet Government is determined to make a first great step towards the democratization of the Soviet Union. But can there be any talk of democracy when every opposition which criticizes the present rulers and their measures is pursued and suppressed with the deadly accusation that it is serving terrorism, that its weapon is murder, and that it is in alliance with the Gestapo?

With the policy of the People's Front in France and Spain, with the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, with the draft of the new Soviet Constitution, Moscow has made moral conquests. Is it not understood in Moscow how terribly this trial and the shootings endanger these conquests? Can this be a matter of

indifference to the rulers in Moscow at a moment when the armaments of fascism threaten the Soviet Union and the propaganda of fascism attempts to stir up all the class instincts of the possessing classes throughout the world against them?

Fascism represents "Bolshevism" and every Labor and Socialist movement to be the work of a gang of criminals. Is it not madness to help fascism by announcing in Moscow judgments: Yes, the men who organized the October Revolution under Lenin's leadership, victoriously fought through the civil war and founded the Soviet State, are a gang of criminals?

Nobody can have a higher opinion than I of the enormous historical achievement of the Soviet Union and of the rapid industrialization and collectivization of Soviet industry under Stalin's direction. I am, and I remain convinced that the future of Socialism throughout the world is dependent upon the success of the development of a Socialist economic system in the Soviet Union which has been undertaken with such tremendous success. I am, and I remain convinced that for this reason the workers throughout the world must rally around the Soviet Union, that they must defend it with all their ability against any aggressor, and that in its defense, in the struggle against its enemies, they must form their united front. I believe that the workers of the world, thanks to our French and Spanish comrades in particular, have already gone a long way towards the realization of these necessities. But for this very reason I see with horror how this unhappy trial and these shootings throw us far back again along this path. What has happened in Moscow is more than a mistake and more than a crime; it is a terrible misfortune for Socialism throughout the world without distinction of parties and tendencies.

*October, 1936.*

ARBEITER-ZEITUNG  
BASEL, SWITZERLAND

## A Letter to Moscow

By Ignazio Silone

This letter was addressed by Silone to the editors of "Das Wort,"  
a magazine now published in Moscow.

You know that I stand for the defense of culture, especially where it is threatened by fascism. You also know that I have always fought on the side of the workers and peasants and for a better world. And you are aware that I have attacked above all the fascist instruments of justice, those machines of destruction that are used so effectively to exterminate all political opposition, the fascist courts, in which the right of defense is taken away from the accused and "confessions" are wrung from them by means of subtle and barbarous tortures that often the strongest cannot withstand.

You say that you are in agreement with all who fight against fascism. Indeed, you claim for yourselves the role of leaders and vanguard in the fight against fascism. But if at the same time you express your solidarity with what is taking place in Russia, if at the same time you approve that oppositionists in Russia are exiled by means of ordinary police orders and tried without being told of the nature of the accusations against them, without receiving the smallest opportunity of proving their innocence through witnesses or independent counsels free from the threat of reprisal—of what value, in view of all this, are your platonic protests against fascist police methods and against fascist justice? In view of this, what can be the content of sincerity carried by the torrents of words that you pour out monthly on the theme of the elementary rights of man, on the subject of human values and on the need of the defense of culture? What, in view of this, is the worth of that humanism which you say you represent?

Only by resorting to sophistry, to word juggling, can you deny that the trials that have just taken place in Russia represent anything other than the collective murder of persons who happened to be in disagreement with the political line now dominating the country. These "trials" were dressed up in the forms of legality and justice. It was quite evident, however, that they were only macabre caricatures of justice. No man with a healthy understanding of human beings can believe such "confessions."

The entire gigantic propaganda apparatus of which the Soviet

government disposes has been set in motion with the purpose of diverting public opinion from the real situation in Russia, with the purpose of veiling the real nature of the objections raised by the executed oppositionists against the government's policies. Thus, attempts have been made to represent the entire matter as a simple moral "purge." Zinoviev, Kamenev, Tomsky, Bukharin, Radek and the other Bolsheviks have been made to appear to be corrupt creatures in the pay of the German Gestapo and having the desire of establishing Fascism in Russia. But you ought to understand that by now the trick of moral inculpation, with which you always attempt to drive fear into the minds of those who disagree with you, no longer works on many of us. We are no longer impressed by the delirium of words that possesses you in such junctures. On the contrary, as a result of both, many of us now first come to feel the need of careful thought and honest discussion on the subject.

When do people falsify the position of a political opponent? When do people impute to him criminal intentions? When do they murder political opponents or force them to commit suicide? When they are too weak or too cowardly to carry on against their opponents honest discussion and an open struggle over the basic problems of the country. We might grant isolated cases of corruption and dishonesty; we are not in a position to acquire facts. But when it is a question of an entire political current, represented by men who had fought all their lives against Tsarist absolutism and the international bourgeoisie, when it is a question of men called Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Bukharin—then no floods of propaganda will succeed in making us believe that what is facing us here is a simple moral "purge" concerning a band of criminals. Any human being in the possession of healthy five senses will understand that a government employing such means in a struggle against political opponents would probably succumb if it permitted itself to run the risk of honest discussion before the public opinion of the country. We have one way of opposing the defamation spread by the Soviet government, and that is to seize the problem by its roots. We must ask:

"What has become of the Russian Revolution? What are the objective reasons for the sharpening of the internal contradictions in the Soviet Union?"

The task of the journalists and the writers in the service of the Russian government (and therefore the task of the magazine *Das Wort*) is cleverly to suppress the all too dangerous discussion on the subject, to turn it aside by means of talk about the new Russian Constitution and the democratic rights which it is said to assure Rus-

sian citizens. But such a maneuver can fool only intellectuals devoid of any critical sense and suffering from the mental sickness called "juridical cretinism." Juridical cretinism consists especially of the habit of considering the laws of a country as the exact representation of the social relations obtaining among the citizens of that country. It is this juridical cretinism that explains, for example, the mental feebleness of those intellectuals who go to Italy, study the country's Fascist laws and come home convinced that there is no longer any capitalism in Italy, as it was abolished there by these same Fascist laws. And should such a traveler chance to go to France, he would return as deeply convinced that the ideals of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" form the basis of the social relationships existing in France, since those are the fateful words that he will see on all government stationery, on all courthouses, on all schoolhouses and over all public comfort stations.

Socialist criticism, since its foundation by Marx and Engels, has warned us against this disease of juridical cretinism. Socialists have always said that we cannot judge a country as a society by its laws but only by the real social relationships existing among human beings. Emil Ludwig, Lion Feuchtwanger and Jacob Buehrer go into raptures over the new Soviet Constitution (too much must not be expected from literary folk). But no Socialist industrial or agricultural worker who has been inoculated with Marxist understanding, and has thus been made immune to juridical cretinism, will place any faith in the abstract paragraphs of the Soviet Constitution. In view of the August slaughter-fest, he will also ask:

"What has become of the Russian Revolution? What are the objective reasons for this aggravation of the inner contradictions in the Soviet Union?"

I have the feeling of committing by means of this letter (I have made certain that it will find publication) an act of justice toward all my friends and readers who have learned to know me and have become acquainted with my way of thinking. I am enabled to speak frankly on the matter especially because there is no connection between me and the executed Russian revolutionaries, whom, by the way, I hold just as responsible as the others for the present state of affairs in Russia.

In this letter I express solidarity with neither one or another Russian faction. This letter is a necessary act springing logically from my general anti-fascist position. If I remained silent now I should not have the courage to write another single line against the Fascist dictatorships.

I am convinced—and this is the conviction that I have tried to express in all my writings—that to arm ourselves against Fascism we do not need material means above all. To oppose Fascism, we need neither heavy armaments nor bureaucratic apparatuses. What we need above all is a different way of looking at life and at human beings. My dear friends, without this different way of looking at life and at human beings, we shall ourselves become Fascists. And I refuse to be a Fascist—even a Red Fascist.

*Translated by Arthur Tower.*

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November, 1936.*

## The Moscow Trials

The people's Commissariat of Justice of the U. S. S. R. has issued in English an official "record of court proceedings" in "The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center." The Soviet government is correct in assuming that the English-speaking world is still interested in the strange trials in which sixteen men, among them several old Bolsheviks, repeated, confirmed, and seemed to revel in confessions of guilt. In these confessions the "employees," as they are designated in the indictment, involved themselves and one another in a widespread plot to assassinate the principal Soviet leaders and seize power. Most of all, however, they incriminated Leon Trotsky as the spiritual leader and actual director of their activities; and one of their number, Valentine Olberg, testified that Trotsky had conspired with the German Gestapo to bring about the assassination of Stalin and the overthrow of his regime. It was this last charge that fell like a thunderbolt not only among the proletarian organizations of the world but also in the ranks of those liberals and democrats who have defended the Soviet Union since its desperate beginnings.

The official record of the court proceedings, unfortunately, does not decide the issue. The reader is not helped by the fact that it is not a transcript—instead, large sections of important testimony are merely summarized in terms not usually to be met with in the records of a court of law. What is more disturbing, there is no indication, with one minor exception, of the presence in court of any documentary evidence beyond the confessions which had already been made in private examinations and set down in the government records. Most of the defendants, as the newspaper accounts indicated at the time, were voluble and often melodramatic in confirming the charges against them. But one of the witnesses was recalcitrant throughout. This was Smirnov, described as "the closest friend of Trotsky and the actual organizer and leader" inside Russia. Smirnov "denies his own direct part in the terroristic activities and only partly admits his crimes," reads the official report. At such times as he denies charges he is confronted with his own confession made privately beforehand or with the testimony of his codefendants, whose confessions are also already on record. "Under the weight of all these *irrefutable facts*," says the report, "Smirnov at last admits" his guilt. At one point he is "completely exposed" by an outside wit-

ness who is not a codefendant but due to be tried on other charges. This witness is his wife, Safonova.

Like all the important political trials that preceded it, this one was conducted in a manner foreign to democratic ideals of justice. The pre-trial conduct of the government controlled press was particularly shocking. On August 16, three days before the trial began, the Soviet papers, according to the *Daily Worker*, recorded that the Russian masses were demanding that the defendants be shown no mercy. On the same day a dispatch quoted *Pravda* as follows: "Investigations disclose a monstrous plot. . . . In an open court, before the whole world, these criminals will answer for their abominable work, and receive the punishment they deserve." Given this overwhelming presumption of guilt, it is at least a question whether the proceedings could be in any true sense a trial.

An underground opposition undoubtedly exists in the Soviet Union, if only because public opposition is impossible. It seems probable that Trotsky's open and persistent criticism of Stalin's regime provided the ideological basis of this opposition. It is inevitable that the Soviet government should try to stamp it out; and if Trotsky was actually directing it, he was liable to the penalties an established government exacts in such cases. But the Soviet government, by conducting an open trial, was under every obligation to conduct that trial according to the ordinary rules of evidence and the ordinary personal safeguards. Genuine evidence of guilt, if any existed, would only strengthen the government's case.

To the outside world the charge that Trotsky conspired with the Gestapo is on its face the most serious and least credible. Yet it is precisely on this point that the fabric of proof, as it is spread out in the official record, becomes most thin. Trotsky is actually linked with the Gestapo only by the testimony of Valentine Olberg, who made his first and last world appearance in the Moscow trial. Before his forcible internment in Norway Trotsky, whose position in world affairs is of somewhat longer standing, stated that he had documents to show that Olberg attempted to become his secretary and was rejected as being a possible spy in the beginning of 1930. It is Olberg's word against Trotsky's.

Olberg at least has had his day in court. Trotsky is entitled to no less, and he has asked that his case be submitted to an international proletarian commission. Yet it was at least partly as a result of the Soviet demand for his deportation that the Norwegian government chose to interpret political asylum as imprisonment incommunicado and confined Trotsky without notice to a remote villa shortly after the close of the Moscow trials. On another page appears the letter which Trotsky wrote to the Minister of Justice Trygve Lie, telling him why he could not accept the more stringent conditions then laid down for his continued stay in Norway. This letter, except for a copy smuggled abroad, was interned with Trotsky along with other

material presumably relating to his defense against the Moscow charges. Trotsky's partisans are now attempting to bring his defense before the public through a court action in Norway.

The mystery that veils the motives and conduct of the Moscow trials cannot conceal their essential implications. Despite the safeguards promised by the new constitution, political considerations still dominate the administration of justice in the Soviet Union. And political considerations dominate the interpretation of political asylum even in a democratic country.

*October 10, 1936.*

## The Moscow Trial

Our readers know well the attitude of the CALL towards the Soviet Union. In common with Socialists the world over, we regard it as a workers' government, striving to establish a Socialist society. We are pledged to defend it.

But our loyalty has never been blind adulation; on the contrary, it has been the highest kind of loyalty possible, the critical loyalty which recognizes errors when committed but nevertheless maintains the comradeship that binds together all who would effect the emancipation of labor.

In this spirit, we approach the problems raised by the recent trial in Moscow. Sixteen men, almost all of whom have served many years in the international labor movement, were charged with the heinous crime of plotting the assassination of the Soviet leaders and allying themselves with German Fascists to accomplish this despicable end. Before an open court-room they confessed. They were immediately sentenced to death and executed. In their confessions, they alleged that they had conspired with some of the highest officials within the Soviet regime and with Leon Trotsky, former commander of the Red Army, now exiled in Norway.

But the story is not a simple one. It has many amazing angles which defy clear interpretation. To begin with, credulity is taxed by the thought that men who had won the confidence of the international working class through years of revolutionary activity could thus betray their own past and their hopes for labor's future. We cannot believe that events have occurred in the Soviet Union of such extraordinary character that loyal servants of the working class could be transformed into Fascists.

There have been other trials of a similar nature that have raised very real doubts. For example, Rafael Abramovitch was accused of joining in a conspiracy in the Soviet Union during the summer of 1928, at a time when he could have been nowhere near the alleged rendezvous of the conspirators since he was attending an international Socialist congress. Workers want to know if the accusations against Trotsky are of the same kind.

From his exile in Norway, Trotsky has maintained his innocence and has pointed the finger of accusation at the Soviet rulers. Despite the astounding confessions—which, by their very unusual character, raise doubts of themselves—there is much to be explained.

The Soviet Union owes it to itself, if not to Trotsky, one of its earliest servants, to permit all the circumstances to be investigated by an international labor commission. To evade such an inquiry would add tremendous weight to the already existing doubts in the minds of many. To submit to it would help to close an unsavory chapter in the history of the working class.

*September 5, 1936.*

SOCIALIST CALL  
NEW YORK

## The Soviet Trial and Labor Unity

By Friedrich Adler  
*Secretary, Labor and Socialist International*

The following article is composed of excerpts from *The Witchcraft Trial in Moscow*,\* a lengthy analysis of the recent Soviet trials.

I confess to the "liberalistic prejudice" that the witchcraft trials which took place during practically three centuries belonged to the most terrible aberrations in the history of mankind. During this era thousands of confessions were solemnly made before the courts, in which the defendant affirmed that he had met the devil in person, that he had concluded a pact with him and that on the basis of this pact he had practised all kinds of sorcery. Thousands suffered death by fire as a result of their confessions. . . . After a fourth "hearing" the great Galileo was already ripe for the final proceedings in public before the tribunal of the Inquisition in Rome. . . . He read out and signed the confession of his sins in the presence of the Cardinals and prelates of the Holy Office, in which the following passage occurred:

"I abjure with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, I curse and detest the said errors and heresies . . . that is, of having held and believed that the Sun is the center of the universe and immovable, and that the Earth is not the center of the same, and that it does not move. . . ."

. . . Five years ago it was pointed out in the pamphlet issued by the Secretariat of the Labor and Socialist International, that:

"It is characteristic of all the great trials which have been set on foot by Krylenko since Schachty that no documents and material documentary proof appear in them. Everything is proved simply by voluntary confessions and self accusations. . . . They work only with guaranteed genuine sincere confessions which, by a wonderful predestined harmony, always correspond exactly to the latest guiding lines of the Politbureau of the Communist Party."

In 1931 I had to make a thorough study of one of these trials. . . . At this trial an alleged visit by our Comrade Abramovitch to Russia was the central feature of the "proofs." The defendants made full "confessions" with regard to the details of their meetings and conversations with Abramovitch in Russia in the summer of 1928, but for me it is absolutely certain that all these statements were

\*Pioneer Publishers, New York.

made against their better knowledge. We proved this in our pamphlet for every phase, and in the most drastic manner of all by the photograph which shows Abramovitch with the delegates of the International Socialist Congress in Brussels at the very time when, according to the "confessions," he is supposed to have been in Russia.

. . . In this decisive "confession" by Holtzman (at the latest trial) the following passage occurred:

"I arranged with Sedov to be in Copenhagen within two or three days, to put up at the Hotel Bristol and meet him there. I went to the hotel straight from the station and in the lounge met Sedov. About 10 A.M. we went to Trotsky. . . ."

This Hotel Bristol, at which Holtzman met Trotsky's son in 1932, according to his confession, is actually given first place among the Copenhagen hotels in a pre-war edition of Baedeker's *Denmark*. But it is not to be found in the post-war guide books, as it was pulled down in 1917 and has not been rebuilt.

But this does not by any means exhaust the number of "confessions" by Holtzman which are demonstrably false. Sedov, Trotsky's son, whom Holtzman claims to have met in the lounge of the Hotel Bristol, and who is supposed to have taken him to Trotsky's apartment in Copenhagen, can prove convincingly that he was not in Copenhagen while Trotsky was staying there. Indeed the truth is more drastic still: Sedov was never in Copenhagen in his life. . . .

In our telegram we put forward the demand that "the accused shall be allowed to have defending counsel who are absolutely independent of the Government." The semi-official spokesmen in Moscow were indignant at this demand. Dimitrov regards it as "ridiculous and pitiable" for, as he says, "the defendants were granted the right to choose their defending counsel . . . but they renounced the right of choosing defending counsel." But as to the necessity of having *foreign* counsel for the defense at a trial in a dictatorship country as well as the reasons for rejecting defending counsel who are dependent upon the dictatorship government, we have a good witness who has said everything which it was necessary to say, namely, Georgi Dimitrov himself. He began his final speech at the Reichstag Fire Trial with the following statement, which we take from the Communist "International Press Correspondence," of December 29, 1933, (p. 1296):

"I proposed the names of a number of lawyers whom I wanted to undertake my defense—Moro, Giefferi, Torres, Campinchi, Willard, Grig-  
orov, and four others, but all my proposals were rejected. I have no particular distrust in Teichert, *but in the present situation in Germany I cannot possibly have the necessary confidence in his defense.* I now address you with the request that you permit Willard to undertake my defense in conjunction with Teichert. If you are not prepared to agree to this, then I shall defend myself as best I can alone."

. . . The sixteen defendants have "confessed"—but the principal defendant, the true "spiritus rector" of all conspiracies, Leo Trotsky, has *not* confessed. On the contrary, he most energetically denied that any of the accusations against him, which the defendants made in their "confessions," are grounded in truth. Yet after having sentenced the sixteen to be shot, the verdict of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court closes with the following order:

"Leo Davidovitch Trotsky, and his son, Leo Leovitch Sedov . . . are subject in the event of their being discovered on the territory of the U.S.S.R. to immediate arrest and trial by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R." (p. 180)

. . . It is our duty to point out that the inclusion of Trotsky in the "amalgam" of the trial is one of the most wanton and ridiculous actions which have ever been encountered in the criminal witchcraft trials. The practical object of this action is the most ignominious chapter of the whole affair. It is an attempt to deprive Trotsky of the right of asylum in Norway and to organize a hue and cry against him which would leave him no place anywhere in the world where he could live.

. . . On the basis of the "results of the trial, which are supposed to 'prove' that Trotsky who is living in Norway, is the organizer and director of the terroristic act, the object of which is the assassination of members of the Soviet Government and leaders of the Soviet People," the Soviet Government, addressed a note to the Norwegian Government on August 30, 1936, the shameless text of which can be read in the Communist "Rundschau" (No. 40, p. 1682). The note closes with the following words:

"The Soviet Government hopes that the Norwegian Government will not fail to take the necessary measures to withdraw from Trotsky the further right of asylum on Norwegian soil."

The Soviet Government openly demands the *withdrawal of the right of asylum from a political refugee*, and it indirectly demands still more, namely, the surrender of Trotsky to the Soviet Government, by pointing to negotiations which are being conducted in Geneva—and are not even concluded—according to which "Members of the League of Nations have to support each other in the struggle against terrorism."

. . . On June 21, 1936, a "*Conference for the Right of Asylum*" initiated by the Communists following a really brilliant idea, adopted in Paris (see "Rundschau," No. 29, p. 1176) a well considered draft of a law for political fugitives which contained the following two paragraphs:

"Article 4: The political refugee shall be admitted to the country in which he seeks asylum, and may not be expelled therefrom.

"Article 5: Should the authorities of his country . . . demand his extradition, satisfaction can only be given them, whatever the official reasons for

the demand, if it is judicially established in an irrefutable manner, after hearing a representative of the coordinating body, comprising the representatives of the refugees and the national organizations concerning themselves with refugees, that the demand is neither directly nor indirectly *motivated by political activity of the refugee.*"

Two months after the Conference in Paris formulated these demands, namely, on August 20, Stalin deals the right of asylum a hammer-blow by demanding of the Norwegian Government the withdrawal of the right of asylum from Trotsky!

. . . The Catholic church is today ashamed of the witchcraft and sorcery trials which it carried out with the greatest aplomb three hundred years ago. It attempts to eradicate their memory. When will the moment come when the Soviet Union will be ashamed of the witchcraft trials, too? For the opponents of joint action in the international sphere the Moscow Trial was a most effective argument. As a result of this trial the tendencies toward unity have received a severe setback. The Soviet Union appeared to take a great step towards creating the conditions for an understanding among the workers as a whole by publishing the plans for the Constitution, but it has taken two steps backward by staging the Moscow Trial.

Nevertheless the working class in the great industrial countries of the West must carry on the struggle jointly with the working class in the Soviet Union if it is to be capable of meeting the great dangers which the approaching new World War will bring. In this war the Soviet Union will be the most important and powerful fortress of the international working class. In view of this war the workers of all countries must unite, all opposition must be overcome, all who regard this future war as the great conflict between the working class and the bourgeoisie must co-operate, all those for whom there can only be one attitude in this war: On the fronts of the class-struggle.

*November 21, 1936.*

## D. N. Pritt on the Moscow Trials\*

. . . I personally attended the trial in Moscow and followed the proceedings carefully. I am satisfied that the case was properly conducted and the accused fairly and judicially treated. Their appearance and demeanor indicated complete absence of ill-treatment or fear.

They voluntarily renounced counsel and addressed the court freely as often as they wished, including the final speeches after the State Prosecutor had finished.

I am personally satisfied that there is no ground whatever for insinuating that there was any unfairness. I consider the whole procedure and treatment of the prisoners throughout the trial as an example to the world.

In a case where prisoners admitted their guilt in a deliberate conspiracy to murder the leaders of the State and overthrow the Government, I think the courts of any country in the world would have passed the death sentence and would have carried it out.

*August 27, 1936.*

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\*The excerpts from Pritt's cable were reprinted in the *New York Daily Worker* on August 29, 1936.

## Friedrich Adler on Pritt

The foregoing cable aroused a great deal of comment after it was published in London. Pritt followed it with a long article on September 3 also in the London *News-Chronicle*. Then he wrote a preface to a pamphlet on the Moscow Trial published by the "Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee." He later sent two letters to the *Manchester Guardian* which were published on September 21 and October 9. His most important statement is contained in a 39-page pamphlet entitled *The Zinoviev Trial*. In his pamphlet, *The Witchcraft Trial in Moscow*, Friedrich Adler gives an extensive criticism of Pritt's arguments. Since the essence of Pritt's point of view is contained in his first cable of August 27, we reprint only that dispatch and only those parts of Adler's criticism which pertain to it. We refer our readers to the several articles of Pritt and to the more extended criticisms in Adler's pamphlet.

The first series of statements made by Pritt were bound to produce the greatest astonishment, since he drew all his conclusions solely from what the spectator sees in court and did not make the slightest reference to the fact that there might also be problems which lie *behind the scenes*—in the preliminary investigation. . . . Pritt untiringly repeats how "courteous" the President of the Court and the Public Prosecutor were in their treatment of the defendants. They are not interrupted even when they speak at great length. . . . These first statements of Pritt's are based upon the tactics of regarding the Moscow trial *as if it had taken place before a normal English court*. In England the stress in legal proceedings really is placed upon the main proceedings in open court; here everything must appear. Criminal procedure on the Continent is very different, but inquisitorial jurisdiction is positively the extreme opposite of an English criminal trial. Here the *stress is laid upon the preliminary investigation*; at the proceedings in open court only the results of this investigation, the finished confessions, are made known. . . .

Pritt's thesis is that if the defendants plead guilty, the court is not obliged to produce further proofs by documents or witnesses. The plea of guilty suffices as a basis for the verdict. . . .

. . . The supporters of Leo Trotsky in Western Europe have set everything in motion in order to hold a "counter-trial to prove the innocence of Leo Trotsky and his supporters." We are so convinced that *fictitious confessions* formed the basis of the charge that the great expenditure of time and money necessary for arranging a counter-trial seems to us to be superfluous. . . . We feel obliged to ask him (Pritt) whether he would be willing to participate in the examination of a very easily verifiable complex of facts of decisive importance for the veracity value of the confessions, namely, the interrogation of Leon Sedov, Trotsky's son . . . whom the indictment

and the "confessions" have turned . . . into one of the principal figures in the alleged terroristic plans. The certainty that Sedov can never have been in the Hotel Bristol suffices for us to form a judgment as to the veracity value of the "confessions" made by the defendants. . . .

When there is a suspicion that the plea of guilty is fictitious then counsel is necessary even in the case of the best courts, if only to protect the defendant from himself. . . .

Pritt repeats the refrain of the semi-official spokesmen of Moscow: "The prisoners voluntarily renounced counsel; they could have had counsel without fee had they wished, but they preferred to dispense with them." Pritt avoids seriously considering the question why all these defendants "*voluntarily* renounced" counsel. . . . He acts as if he did not know that his "Moscow colleagues" are useless in a political trial of this importance, since if they desired to conduct the defendants' case seriously they would have to fear the revenge of the rulers.

DER KAMPF  
(OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE AUSTRIAN SOCIAL-  
DEMOCRATIC PARTY)

## Some Fundamental Observations on the Moscow Executions

The adaptation of the political and cultural superstructure of Soviet society to the newly won economic basis does not take place in a uniform line of development. It is again and again interrupted by major relapses and retreats. If the new constitution is the first great victory of the democratic tendency in this path of development, the trial against Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov, and the new wave of terror which has led to the condemnation and execution of the old co-workers of Lenin, must be regarded as the worst possible relapse.

In this struggle between the democratic tendencies of development in Soviet society and counter-tendencies rooted in the ruling habits of the governing bureaucracy, the real question at issue is the great and holy cause of socialism itself. The real question is whether the Soviet Union, the first nation in the world to create the economic basis of a socialist society, should and will prove to the world that on this basis a realm of true freedom, human dignity and humanity can be established.

The socialist press of the world has reacted in various ways to the Moscow trials. Many social-democratic newspapers satisfy themselves with the observation: "This is a natural consequence of dictatorship!" But could the Soviet Union have constructed the economic basis of a socialist society with any other means except dictatorship? Other newspapers content themselves with using the Moscow trials as an argument in the struggle against the Communists. But there is something much more fundamental and important involved than an argument for factional purposes within the working class movement. Several socialist papers have even discovered an encouraging aspect of the trials. In not only bourgeois but in socialist newspapers we have come across the following train of thought. Stalin, the man of "socialism in one country," has shot the Trotskyists, the proponents of "world revolution"; this is the proof that Stalin has abandoned all ideas of world-revolution, that the Soviet power no longer desires to support the proletarian revolution in other countries; therefore the capitalist states can work all the more peacefully together with the Soviet Union in the League of Nations and conclude pacts with her.

With such statesmanlike sobriety we cannot judge the Moscow

trials. For to us the Soviet Union is *more* than a welcome ally of capitalist states. To us it is the land of coming socialism. It was not the reformists but we, who had set such great store, such great hopes on the Soviet Union for the victory of socialism throughout the world, that were utterly dismayed by the Moscow trials and regarded them as "a terrible misfortune for Socialism throughout the world without distinction of parties and tendencies."

The trial took place before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court. On the defendant's bench there sat a typical "amalgam"—besides old revolutionists, the most intimate friends and co-workers of Lenin, a pair of very questionable characters. The defendants were accused of having organized, together with the agents of Hitler's Gestapo, attempts upon the lives of the leaders of the Soviet Union. In other words they were accused of the gravest crime a revolutionist can commit. All the defendants renounced their rights to counsel—all sixteen without exception chose to appear before the court without the advice or help of counsel. The only proof of guilt offered was the *confessions* of the defendants.

Let us assume for a moment that it really was the case that blind hate against Stalin had misled old revolutionists to the insane and criminal thought that the interest of the revolution demanded the forcible elimination of Stalin. How would such men have conducted themselves before the tribunal. They would have openly declared their conviction and proceeded to justify it. They would have attempted to accuse Stalin before the court of having led the revolution on to a false course and of having become an obstacle to its victory. They would have attempted to transform the trial against themselves into a trial against Stalin. A great many revolutionary terrorists have conducted themselves in this way before bourgeois courts. But not a single one of the sixteen did it.

One might object: these sixteen were no revolutionary heroes. In that case one would expect that they would behave in the same way as people of that kind behave throughout the world. They would have denied their guilt and their participation in the conspiracy. At the very least, when confronted by the statements of their confederates, they would have attempted to minimize their participation and pleaded mitigating circumstances. But even that the sixteen did not do.

They not only willingly confessed to what the state's attorney accused them. They also confessed that they were actuated by no ideal or political motivation but only by sheer greed for personal power. They called themselves bandits, murderers, traitors. They declared that they justly earned a sentence of death. Whoever has read the report of the trial cannot escape the impression that he is reading about a group of self-flagellating monks—confessions of repentant, crawling, and miserable sinners.

Certainly, it is barely possible that one or another of these sixteen

may have been overwhelmed by remorse and have sought to ease his conscience by confession. But all sixteen?

The inexplicable behavior of the accused before the court is the reason why the trial has failed to convince so many critical observers in Europe. In fact the behavior of the accused has awakened the fearful impression in the whole of Europe that the human dignity and self-respect of old revolutionists were broken before they were physically destroyed.

As mysterious as were so many aspects of the Moscow trial, just as clear were its political meaning and purpose.

It was not directed so much against the accused. It was directed against Trotsky. To paint him as the organizer of the conspiracy against the lives of the leading men of the Soviet Union, as a comrade-in-arms of the Gestapo, as a "counter-revolutionist," as a "bandit" and "fascist dog," to destroy him morally—that was the purpose of the whole proceedings.

The trial itself became the signal of a wave of terror against all who were suspected of having any kind of relationship to the Trotskyists. Why? Because the cult of leadership, the abolition of the specific class privileges of the proletariat, the great differences in income in the Soviet Union, the development of a privileged class through titles, special powers, rewards, higher social status and income, the new evaluation of the family, the reactionary attitude to school reforms, the re-introduction of the law against abortions—all of these were in flat contradiction with party traditions of Bolshevism, evoked oppositional tendencies and reproduced the danger of the development of an *opposition from the left against the Soviet government*.

The new political course of the Communist International carries this danger over into the international field. In France, the Communists have set up a demand to transform the Popular Front into a "French Front," to a front of all good Frenchmen against Hitler Germany. In Spain, the Communists have defended the view that the bloody struggle of the Spanish working class is not the dictatorship of the proletariat and has not socialism as its goal but is merely in defense of democracy against Fascism. In Italy, the Communists have proclaimed as their slogan "the union of Fascists and Communists, Catholics and Socialists" for a common struggle against the "200 families."

This political course is in such a crying contradiction to the whole doctrine and tradition of Bolshevism that it must call forth a left opposition in the Communist ranks. But the symbol of any Communist left opposition is the name of Trotsky. That explains the savagery of the attack on Trotskyism. In the attempt to head off the danger of the development of any left opposition in their own ranks, they are attempting to depict every oppositionist as a Trotskyist, and every Trotskyist as a Gestapo-agent.

We have no sympathy for Trotskyism. As a doctrine we regard it as sectarian and in some of its features even reactionary. But as far removed as we are from Trotskyism and as sharply as we differentiate our views from it, we will not be made to believe that Trotsky, the strategic genius of the October Revolution and the Civil War, is a Fascist, an accomplice of the Gestapo, a counter-revolutionary bandit.

Thousands of Communists throughout the world believe as we do about the new wave of terror in the Soviet Union. But they remain silent. They must remain silent. The Moscow dictators tolerate no criticism. Whoever desires to remain a member of the Communist Party must surrender his freedom to express his opinion.

But we are free. That is why it is our duty to express our opinion. For in the struggle of the tendencies and the counter-tendencies of the Soviet Union, the question most sacred to us is the question of socialism itself.

The Communist press of course answers every criticism with unheard-of abuse. The good intentions of the VIIIth Congress of the Communist International are already forgotten. Once again they are denouncing socialists as they did in the good old days when Zinoviev was head of the Communist International. At that time everyone was a traitor who dared to have an opinion different from that of Zinoviev; today everyone who is not convinced that Zinoviev is a "Fascist dog" is himself a defender of murders and Gestapo agents.

Louis de Brouckère, the president of the Socialist and Labor International, in recent times has become more and more the voice through which the necessities of the working class movement as a whole has been expressed. It was he who, on his return from Madrid, called for the active support of the struggling Spanish proletariat. It was he who fought valiantly at the London Congress of International Trade Unions for the unity of the working class. It was he who on his own responsibility, and unauthorized by the Socialist and Labor International, spoke at the Brussels Peace Congress. All that has not in the least prevented the Communist press from hurling the most libellous charges against him because of his defense of Trotsky's right to be heard. De Brouckère has answered in a few words. We quote them here because they constitute also our own answer to the Communists' denunciation:

"I have said that I am loath to believe that Trotsky is an accomplice of Hitler's. *Pravda* replies by saying this shows that I myself am also one; which proves how loosely and unscrupulously it makes its charges and how justified I was in not placing credence in them.

"Insults have never succeeded in forcing me to be silent. I shall continue to contest the 'official truth' in Russia as elsewhere whenever I am convinced that this is necessary in the interests of real truth.

"Unity is only fruitful between free men."  
*Prague, October, 1936.*

DAS NEUE TAGE-BUCH  
PARIS AND AMSTERDAM

## Gestapo-Man Trotsky

The Moscow People's Commissariat of Justice has just issued a German translation of the "Report of the Court Proceedings in the Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center." It is a book of 185 pages which contains the official material of the trial: the indictment against the accused, the protocol of their execution, the prosecutor's speech, and finally the concluding pleas of the accused together with their sentence.

The publication of this material is a fresh example of how stupidly simple dictatorships are when they try to cover up their sins before the eyes of the outside world. For this official report is infinitely compromising to Soviet justice. No one who has the slightest notion of juristic things or a feeling for the decent administration of justice can read it without being terribly shocked, and the more one hopes to see in the Soviet Union a partner in the fight against Nazi barbarism the more shocked one will be. This official Soviet account of the Moscow trial removes the last shadow of doubt about the character of the Moscow executions and what preceded them.

Of course, this official collection of documents solves neither the political mystery—the *purpose* of the Moscow trial—nor the psychological mystery—the obviously false self-accusations of people like Kamenev and Zinoviev. But it does establish the fact that the chief witness for the incredibility of their "confessions" is the state's attorney himself. In the closing speech of the prosecutor we read:

"Not the slightest confidence must be placed in these certified and hardened deceivers. They themselves understand that they do not deserve any confidence. While examining Zinoviev, I asked him, 'Are you speaking the *whole* truth *now*?' and he answered, 'Now I am speaking the whole truth.' *But what proof is there of this, how can we believe them, when they have surpassed all conceptions of perfidy, cunning, deceit, and treachery.*"

Indeed, these proofs do not exist, nothing even remotely resembling proofs. The very "confessions" of Zinoviev and Kamenev are completely incredible because, if for no other reason, at no phase in the preliminary investigation did they hesitate for a moment to confess to anything that was asked of them. Space is inadequate to enumerate all the psychological and criminological absurdities revealed in the 185 pages of this book; but there is hardly a single page which does not strengthen our opinion of the nature of this

trial—which does not testify to the innocence of the accused and the executed. We point only to several examples.

Neither the indictment, nor the protocol, nor the prosecutor's speech, nor the sentence, indicates in the slightest way how the existence of this so-called "terrorist center" became known. One might suspect that the conspirators were caught in some act or that some "plans" of a conspiracy were discovered. Nothing about such things are reported. In one single place of the report there is a laconic remark that "on the basis of evidence which has recently come to light in connection with the discovery in 1936 of a series of terrorist groups of Trotskyists and Zinovievists, it is proved that Zinoviev, Kamenev, *etc.* were also the direct organizers of the murder of Kirov." But what precisely was "the evidence which had recently come to light?" How, through what, and through whom, were a "series of terrorist groups discovered?" It is clear that it is just these questions the answers to which have a special significance for this trial. In the Reichstag Fire Trial, Dimitroff, Tanev, and Popoff could prove their innocence only because the police and witnesses were compelled to state in all detail how they happened to pick up the trail of the accused. Nothing of the sort took place at the Moscow trial. All we know is that one fine day the accused are in prison and are making "confessions." And no one has yet discovered what the particular circumstances were, what the material evidence was, which made these presumable conspirators, these presumable murderers who were capable of anything, confess to the whole history of their intended or realized crimes! For no material evidence is present! Neither incriminating letters nor any other written documents; not even confiscated weapons which, after all, are necessary to the execution of any terrorist crime.

But it is not only the *material evidence* which is conspicuous by its absence in this report of the trial; *living witnesses* for the misdeeds of the accused are not present. Or at least were not introduced. The one exception, Safanova, the wife of the accused Smirnov, is brought from jail to the prisoner's bar to denounce her "lying" husband. This absence of witnesses for both prosecution and defense is unparalleled—and all the more monstrous because continually questions arise which require confirmation or refutation by witnesses. For example, Olberg tells a highly colored story about a Honduran passport which he used to travel to Russia in order to kill Stalin on Trotsky's orders. Through Tukalevski, the director of the Slavonic Library of the Prague Foreign Office he got the passport, and through his brother, Paul Olberg, he knew that Tukalevski was "an agent of the Fascist secret police." In answer to a supplementary question of the prosecuting attorney, Olberg acknowledges that his brother Paul was "an agent of the Fascist secret police." It is essential to this story that—if not the Director of the Prague Library—at least the brother, Paul Olberg, be called as witness. Furthermore,

it is clear from the indictment that Paul Olberg is in prison in Moscow and, together with thirteen others whose names were mentioned in the course of the trial, "is still being investigated." But neither Paul Olberg nor the others to whom the accused refers were called as witnesses.

The case of Olberg is especially grave because the Russian documents show that he made his confession against Trotsky as early as February while the others were heard in May and July. It was Olberg who set the thing going. There was enough time from February to July to check up on Olberg's deposition or to ask the Czechoslovakian authorities to do so. In the meantime Olberg's testimony has been shown to be an absolute swindle. In Prague, a number of unimpeachable witnesses have come forward who were acquainted with the history of Olberg's passport in all its details. There are also witnesses on Olberg's relations to Trotsky. These relations extended no further than an attempt by Olberg to induce the German writer Fritz Pfempfert to recommend him to Trotsky to be his secretary. Instead of doing this Pfempfert wrote Trotsky and warned him, successfully, not to permit this impossible, obviously suspicious, person to come anywhere near him.

On the basis of the Russian documents one could compose thick Brown Books which detail for detail prove the complete baseness of the Moscow trials. The whole thing was framed in a frightfully crude way. May we be spared a repetition of it!

*September 12, 1936.*

## What Have You Made of the October Revolution?

By Marcel Martinet

At a time when all thoughts turn to the heroic struggle of the Spanish proletariat, the world is stupefied to learn of the crude setting, the incredible progress and conclusion of what has been called the Moscow "trial." The affair was finished in a few days. In reality, it has hardly begun, and its traces will not be wiped out for a long time. . . . Confronted with the burning of the Reichstag and the Leipzig trial and with the massacre of Hitler's oldest associates of the night of June 30, 1934, every revolutionist in the world was overwhelmed with disgust. But Fascist depravity did not take them by surprise; above all they were not injured by it, rather were they vindicated.

However, in the face of the Moscow affair, the reaction of revolutionists is again a mixture of shock and disgust, but this time coupled with shame. For this bloody political circus was manufactured in the country of the October Revolution, by the people who claim to be the Socialist pioneers of the world. The world senses confusedly that yet another step has just been taken in the corruption which has threatened to submerge humanity since 1914.

What do we actually know of the affair?

As much as it has pleased the Russian press—that is to say, the Russian government—to make known. The introduction of the accused is from the very first managed like the entrance of clowns, at once scrupulously prepared, while apparently improvised. The art of skillful stage production is a Russian art, and it is also an art known to the police.

The most outstanding among the accused, Zinoviev and Kamenev, had already been "judged" and condemned, at the scandalous trial which followed the murder of Kirov in December, 1934. Since then they had been deprived of every chance for political action. Nevertheless, it was "crimes" for which they had been already condemned that they had to answer anew. The death sentences which the accused themselves demanded, with a strange unanimity, were automatically rendered. The executions followed without delay. But the whole remained shrouded in a peculiar mystery.

That is all that is known.

On the day after the Kirov trial, Romain Rolland, making a comparison with the guillotined of '93, admired the spiritual gran-

deur of leaders who were contented—more than fifteen years after the taking of power—to execute wholesale a few dozen pawns, to exile a few thousand to Siberia, and to isolate for a time the principal “culprits”—that is, the moral culprits!

Today it is those same “culprits” who are being executed and for the same “crimes.” And these were the men who were the comrades and friends of Lenin, the leaders of the militant revolution, the organizers of the Communist International. With the exception of the old man who is dead, and that other old man imprudently thrown into the uncertain tomb of exile, and of that third, the one and only, who is triumphant—all the old guard is there, shot by the regime whose victory they wrought. We must hence conclude that the founders of the revolution were capable of the worst crimes, associated with the worst enemies of the revolution for the sole end of destroying the conquests of the revolution. What a unique example of collective depravity! Or, if not . . . ?

But there is proof! The Russian government and its officials repeat to us with insistent abuse which poorly conceals the uneasiness and anxiety which oppresses them, that this proof is overwhelming. Yet, despite all the resources of an expert police, not a single document, not a single fact. . . . Well then, where are the proofs? One sole proof, but indeed, one of unmatched magnitude in the annals of crime, the stereotyped and frenzied “confessions” of these model accused, of these monsters who add to the monstrosity of their crimes the more frightful monstrosity of their confessions. It is all too beautiful. We do not defend these exemplary criminals who, had they not been so furiously intent upon dishonoring themselves, would have been able to explode the charges against them. We do not defend them. In the oppressive atmosphere in which they agreed to their roles, they dug their own graves in the contempt in which history will hold them. . . . Danton was without doubt an adventurer and Robespierre a pure revolutionist. But when Robespierre dispatched Danton to the scaffold, Danton did not rush to his death crying, “The great Robespierre is right!” He choked with rage and with threats of vengeance. This we can understand. But we do not understand history as it is manufactured today in Moscow. The staff of *L'Humanité*, who vilified the dead, have gone to great lengths all in vain. They explain nothing, because they are *unable* to explain anything.

However, a general line does clearly emerge. Those who have just been shot had for a long time practised the unprincipled politics to which they themselves fell victim. From one capitulation to another, they finally sank to the depths of that profound cowardice, or possibly weariness. As a result of what inducements? Or what mysterious promises? And in what manner did they die? Here again all is dark. . . . But these men were great revolutionists and continued to embody the tradition of October. It is this which is clear. The

clarity grows almost to transparency when one sees Stalin left in the burning heap alone—Stalin, the former terrorist, true to himself, the secretive Georgian, the master of the Russian state, the man who, six months after the murder of Kirov, “understood and approved” the measures of capitalist defense of the renegade Pierre Laval, measures which happened to dovetail with the defense of the Moscow “trial.” We do not clearly perceive the immediate and detailed reasons for the proceedings of the Moscow trial but the significance is easily discerned: *it is a decisive step towards the fascization of the state which was born of the heroism of the revolutionary fighters and militants of the October.*

So, addressing ourselves to the authors and the accomplices, we ask the question so vital to the revolutionary proletariat:

What have you made of the October Revolution?

The affair is flooded with a more illuminating light when one considers that it is not over, that the arrests and the suicides continue and reach the very heart of the Stalinist outfit. It is as if they wished to eliminate physically all the older generation, and all is centered around the person, around the specter of Trotsky.

Stricken out of official history by an impudent falsification of reality, exiled, hunted down, isolated, sick, the ogre lives—terribly alive despite all efforts, all slanders, all plots, and all traps. To the extent that he still lives, the tradition of October persists, despite all, intensely alive. Even apart from the fight for which he is always ready, the old insurgent, whom they did not dare to destroy when they had him in their power, remains an intolerable symbol and, for many, in Russia and throughout the world, the living mirror of their guilt.

It is important, then, that he disappear as soon as possible. If they do not succeed in doing away with him physically, they must at least annihilate him morally. Those who hold mankind in great contempt believe that they will be able to circulate as true the grossest and most fantastic lie, if only they assert it with enough effrontery. And why not the most spectacular buffoonery? Why not Trotsky, the creator of the Red Army, the organizer of the great victory, why not Trotsky, an agent of the Hitlerite Gestapo? Evidently the fabricators of such an imbecilic infamy are not interested in supporting it with the slightest proof. The point is simply to bellow it forth with such resolute voices that the proletariat will not have the audacity to subject it to doubt; and then it will be true.

It is thus that one reads day after day the declarations, articles, confessions of the accused and after them of all those who were suspect or who were in danger of being suspected, repeating incessantly the damaging and monotonous lesson. “It is he, it is he, it is he”—the old friends distinguishing themselves only by their more sordid insults and their more hypocritical tone in a spirit mimicked from the professional penitents of the Salvation Army.

In our politics, we are not Trotskyists. But this obsession with Trotskyism, which has dominated and which continues to dominate the affair, characterizes the procedure and reveals its exact sense. It is necessary to destroy what still lives of October, all but the petrified idolatry.

This is preserved religiously, for it is already the death and the decay of the revolutionary spirit. But if Lenin could return to life, he who permitted himself in his *Testament* to advise that Stalin be replaced in the Secretariat of the party by somebody "more patient, more loyal, more polite, and more considerate of his comrades as well as less capricious," Lenin would receive the honors of a private tumbril. However, since he is happily gone and they have the keys of the mausoleum in safe-keeping, it is against the other guardian of October that they must level their blows. In short, it is Trotsky who must be beaten down. And what must be beaten down in the symbolic figure of Trotsky, we repeat, is whatever *opposes* the fascization of the Russian state.

"The Russian Revolution defends itself," *L'Humanité* prints in poster letters. No! When the revolution regains power and vitality, it will not need such means as this to defend itself. We, who are not bound to the nationalism of the country in which we were born, we, who do not "love our country" because we know that to love our country in the present epoch is to love and aid the masters who exploit their people, stir them up against other peoples, and prevent their emancipation—we, who are attached only to the emancipation of the international working class, condemn the odious farce of the Moscow trial as a betrayal of the revolution.

\* \* \*

We condemn yet another maneuver directed against the proletariat of this country.

All the accomplices of the operation which the Stalinist bureaucracy has just enacted untiringly repeat the same insults, the same threats, against anyone who hesitates to glorify the Moscow shootings. An intensive propagandist attack is being waged to induce the French workers to give up thinking for themselves, to persuade them that the catechism is sacred and that if they deviate from a single line, a single word, they will also become renegades and traitors. This type of notorious procedure, aimed at the development of the most widespread regimentation and conformity, was not invented yesterday. Unfortunately it is being practiced with an ever more dreadful efficiency.

Some honest comrades thus hypnotized are doubtless afraid that if they falter, they will automatically fall into the camp of counter-revolution. We say to them only this: "At what point will you stop

if you remain quiet? Beginning today you are actually working against social revolution. You are at the exact point where the socialist traitors, patriotic anarchists, and class-collaborationist trade-unionists were on the day after the declaration of war in August, 1914. These at least waited until the war had washed away all the dikes before they disowned themselves. Where, we ask, will you be tomorrow?"

But to the leaders doing their all to chloroform the proletariat, we ought to speak in another way. "Your tactics of intimidation, of mob enthusiasm, and of persuasive lying, we know. It is the favorite method, almost the ABC, of fascism. It is the antithesis of the workers' revolution to establish a society of free men. The revolution directs itself only to conscience and the directive will of man. It doesn't begin by transforming its militants into slaves. Your 'high politics' in which stupid flattery is seasoned with ugly threats, this thick deceit inherited from the bourgeois politicians, neither frightens us nor troubles us. You say that our criticism will coincide with that of a Doriot. The baseness of this adventurer, educated and corrupted in your school, does not spring from the arguments he advances, but from the use to which he puts them. Thus he remains one of your own family circle and you can keep him. But we despise you. We denounce you as the gravediggers of the social revolution."

But the gravediggers will disappear and the social revolution will be realized. We know that we are very few. Some of us fought against the imperialist war in August, 1914. We were then much less numerous and much weaker than we are today. Still we did not despair and we lived to see Zimmerwald, the October Revolution, and the awakening of man. Loyal to the October Revolution, we feel ourselves today dishonored by the miserable caricatures which dare to lay claim to it. We do not lose heart. Proletarian justice, human liberty, will not succumb to the gossip of vain scribblers, to the maneuvers of unscrupulous politicians. In order that the emancipation of the working class may be established after the overthrow of the old world, we hurl today at the schemers and the liars, our merciless accusation:

*"What have you made of the October Revolution?"*

*Paris, September 10, 1936.*

NEUE FRONT  
(GERMAN SOCIALIST WORKERS' PARTY)

### Confessions Which Accuse!

Due to the haste with which the Moscow trials were prepared, there was a great deal in the stage-direction and execution which was unavoidably faulty. For obvious reasons concrete proofs and concrete questions were carefully evaded by both the loquacious accused and the prosecuting attorney. The few concrete details which did come to light revealed such inaccuracies, contradictions, and absurdities that they alone can serve as documentary witnesses against the Moscow trials. The most palpable contradictions appear when we examine the answers to the most elementary question: at what period of time did the so-called Trotskyist-Zinovievist terrorist center come into existence? Most of the accused asserted that the center had existed since the fall of 1932. Interestingly enough, however, the testimony showed clearly that both Zinoviev and Kamenev were sent into exile in the fall of 1932 and had to leave Moscow. Nonetheless, as the real leaders, could they not have participated in the organization of the center? But two of the accused also add that before the departure of Zinoviev and Kamenev, it was decided, at a meeting at which they were both present together with a group of the accused, to suspend the activities of the center. This pause lasted from the fall of 1932 to the fall of 1934! What becomes, then, on closer examination, of the continuous "terrorist activity"—even on the ground of the "confessions" of the accused themselves? The state's attorney, however, who bases all of his charges on the statements of the accused, suddenly maintains in this connection that the high point of the terrorist activity was the year 1933.

The accused Holtzmann recalled with great exactitude that he had a *rendezvous with Sedov*, the son of Trotsky, in *December, 1932, in the Hotel Bristol in Copenhagen*, and in addition that he had received terrorist orders from Trotsky himself. There are two things surprising about this confession:

1. Numerous witnesses have come forward to testify that Sedov never was in Copenhagen.
2. Since 1917 the Hotel Bristol has not existed in Copenhagen. (It was rebuilt in 1936.—*Ed.*)

A series of statements and "confessions" of Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Smirnov seem to be shrewdly calculated blows against the whole case of the prosecution. Several times Zinoviev says more than it

was possible for him to say. The activity of the terrorist center extended, according to his statement, "factually to the year 1936"—which permits only one conclusion, that this activity of the "center" since the end of 1934 was carried out under the supervision of the G. P. U.

The sole document introduced in the case was a citation from a letter of Trotsky's which contained the demand that Stalin be "removed." This letter was presumably found in the false bottom of a trunk belonging to the accused Holtzmann. But as a matter of fact the solitary document of the whole trial is nothing else than the "Open Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union" which Trotsky wrote March 1, 1932, on the occasion of his deprivation of Russian citizenship and was published in the *Bulletin of the Opposition* (Russian—Ed.) The important passage which contains the sharp comment against Stalin reads:

"Isolated from the apparatus, opposed to the apparatus, Stalin is nothing, an empty blank. The man who yesterday was the symbol of the governing apparatus, will to-morrow in the eyes of all be the symbol of the bankrupt apparatus. It is time to abandon the Stalin myth. One must trust the working class and its real not counterfeit party. One must at last follow Lenin's final, urgent advice: Remove Stalin."

To introduce this "Open Letter" as documentary evidence of terrorist plans means only one thing: that the alleged command to murder Stalin was directed to the Central Executive Committee, the highest administrative instance of the Soviet Union, and was formulated in the words of the old Bolshevik, Lenin.

Paris, September, 1936.

## The Trial of the Trotskyites in Russia

Sixteen persons have been put to death in Soviet Russia for a conspiracy to assassinate a large group of the present leaders in that country and to overturn the government. Nearly all of those executed had formerly held high place; they included two once world-famous figures, Zinoviev and Kamenev. Others now under investigation are equally well known: among them are Bukharin, Rykov and Radek. The sixteen already tried and executed described themselves as Trotskyites and implicated that famous former leader, at one time second in importance only to Lenin himself. Trotsky now living in exile in Norway, repudiates all complicity and announces he will soon issue documents to prove that instead of being guilty, he has been the victim of a plot against him concocted by the Russian G. P. U.

The trial which ended a few days ago was, to Western eyes, an extraordinary spectacle. There were no witnesses for the defense and none for the state except the accused themselves. All sixteen admitted they were followers of the philosophy of Trotsky who, as is well known, has always demanded communist revolutions in all parts of the world at the earliest possible moment. Fourteen of the sixteen admitted participation in the plans to murder a dozen of the present Russian leaders. Even those who denied terroristic activities made no appeal for clemency, although two others did so. The prisoners accused themselves and each other with the utmost vehemence, their general attitude being one of sinners who have repented after having seen the light.

The charges made against Trotsky, in a conspiracy that began in 1932, included sending money into the U. S. S. R. for the plotters and forwarding at least one secret communication, written in invisible ink on the back of a magazine. The defendants also implicated the present German government, charging that five assassins sent in from abroad were aided by forged passports prepared by the Gestapo, the German secret police. This charge has been met by Germany with a stony silence which, as international relations go nowadays, is tantamount to an admission of guilt. One of these sixteen men sat through last summer's meeting of the Communist International with a Browning pistol on his person, waiting vainly to get close enough to Stalin to shoot him. Three other attempts on Stalin's life were made. The defendants were implicated in the assassination of Kirov, which ought to set at rest the persistent reports that his murder was non-political and was made the excuse

for unjustified wholesale reprisals—old charges that have been repeated in the New York press within the past few days.

What is one to make of all this? Some commentators, writing at a long distance from the scene, profess doubt that the executed men were guilty. It is suggested that they may have participated in a piece of stage play for the sake of friends or members of their families, held by the Soviet government as hostages and to be set free in exchange for this sacrifice. It is hinted that to discredit Trotsky in the eyes of the world is now the matter of greatest importance to Stalin and that the whole affair may have been trumped up for this purpose. Other commentators, without arguing the guilt or innocence of the accused, concern themselves with the question why the trial was held at this moment and suggest it was an attempt to take the minds of the Russian masses off the spectacle of the civil war in Spain, in view of the contemplated policy of neutrality, a policy which, it was assumed, would prove extremely unpopular.

We see no reason to accept any of these labored hypotheses, or to take the trial at other than its face value. Governments are rarely so sensitive to opinion in other countries as the inhabitants of those countries would like to believe. Foreign correspondents present at the trial pointed out that the stories told by these sixteen defendants, covering a series of complicated happenings over nearly five years, corroborated each other to an extent that would be quite impossible if they were not substantially true. The stories were not identical—such a thing would tend to confirm the suspicion that they were manufactured—but they were practically the same. The defendants, who spoke volubly and extemporaneously for several days, gave no evidence of having been coached, parroting confessions painfully memorized in advance, or of being under any sort of duress.

The outside world tends to attribute to the Communists, as to all other specialized groups, a unanimity that does not exist. The blunt fact is that when Trotsky was in power, he had millions of devoted adherents. His ideas about early and complete world revolution were at one time the official and approved doctrine of the Communist Parties in all countries. When the Stalinist group came to power and Trotsky was exiled, neither his personality nor his views could be erased by magic from the hearts and minds of so many people. The hatred American Tories feel for Roosevelt is probably no more violent than the similar feeling the Russian Trotskyites had for Stalin. Let it be remembered, too, that these were "Old Bolsheviks," accustomed all their lives to underground revolutionary plotting, prepared to run desperate personal risks and quite confident of their own ability, given the chance, to take over and operate the government of Russia or any other country. Such men, while willing to take the consequences of their actions if caught, would be the last to confess, for ulterior motives, a guilt that did not exist.

While the evidence points to the genuineness of the plot (although it does not thus far seem to us conclusive in regard to Trotsky's personal participation) we see no reason to believe that the present Russian government is in any serious internal danger. It is obvious that the rulers of the U. S. S. R., in common with those in other lands, are in constant risk of assassination either from a madman's bullet or that of a political conspirator. But there is ample evidence that the overwhelming mass of the Russian population now approves of the Stalinist policy of building a successful socialist society first of all in Russia, so that its example can shine out to the world.

And we need not shut our eyes to the fact that this position is largely the result of skillful, universal and long-continued influence upon the rising generation—an influence its enemies will call propaganda and its friends, education. To anyone in Soviet Russia thirty years of age or younger, Trotsky is only a name—if even that. In this group is roughly half the population, and it is far the more important half. They have grown up in a new world and they have no contact with any other. The conspirators who have been put to death and the others who, presumably, will meet the same fate, are nearly all middle-aged or elderly. There is no reason to believe that they represent a movement that is growing or has any present vitality of its own, or any future.

Perhaps the deepest lesson to be learned from the Russian trial is the profound, unchangeable stubbornness of human nature. From the standpoint of practical expediency, these men had little to gain and much to lose by their effort to bring down the Soviet state in ruins. Even the most quixotic revolutionary terrorists must have known that their chance of success was slight, the likelihood of failure overwhelming, the doom that has befallen them almost inevitable. Over and over again history teaches us that most men are incapable of abandoning the fixed set of ideas with which they equip themselves during their early, more impressionable period. They will die before they will alter, as these sixteen men—and how many others!—have died.

*New York, September 2, 1936.*

## Brief Editorial Comment

LE PEUPLE  
BRUSSELS,

The feeling of socialist and democratic parties for humanity and justice as well as the supreme interests of the international working class movement forbid us in these critical times to view with indifference the frightful juridical massacre which has taken place in Moscow.

We say that the responsible leaders of the cause of the Soviet Union have done it a very bad service. The incomprehensible terroristic acts committed by the Moscow leaders will have a devastating effect even upon their well-wishers. International cooperation, which is so necessary today, will be severely affected and may even be rendered impossible.

\* \* \*

ARBEITERBLADET (NORWEGIAN LABOR PARTY)  
OSLO,

We understand that it must have been an absolute necessity to destroy the accused but the real motive of the accusation and sentence of death must have been quite different from that brought forward at the trial. With an ill-concealed joy and satisfaction the bourgeois, fascist, and reactionary press comments upon the trial. It rubs its hands and smiles happily because the most intimate communist co-workers of Lenin are being exterminated. Such things must come to an end. We cannot postpone matters but *must* discuss them in a fundamental way. The working class has the right to know what the real background of this trial is. The way to Fascism is prepared if the workers merely accept and believe things. We must see to it that they know.

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SOZIALDEMOKRAT  
PRAGUE,

Whoever is not compelled as a party-Communist to renounce political criticism will realize, from the knowledge he has of Trotskyism, the essential improbability of a conspiracy to murder under the leadership of Trotsky; he will easily find explanations in the internal development of Russia why Stalin decided, just before the convocation of the new constitutional congress, to eliminate any murmur of opposition.

The development of the Soviet Union from a party dictatorship to the dictatorship of a *Führer*, concealed in democratic forms, is not a Communist matter alone but concerns the whole socialist movement. The liquidation of Bolshevism and Stalin's forcibly imposed new tack, whose end and consequences are not in sight, will have the strongest influence on the whole European socialist movement.

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VOLKSRECHT  
ZURICH,

It is necessary in the interests of the struggle against fascist tyranny and its methods, in the interests of the preservation of the honor of European democracy and the socialist movement of Europe, sharply to divorce ourselves from the methods of Stalin and to keep our banner clean of any stain of opportunism. The more unworthy and contemptible the behavior of a certain kind of slavish soul is on this question, the more pressing becomes our task to characterize the shocking spectacle of the Moscow trials for what it is, and to describe it as it appears to us and to all other honor and truth loving socialists.

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ARBEITERZEITUNG  
BASEL,

We are ardent advocates of the unity of the working class. This unity of action, however, must rest on definite presuppositions. We refuse such unity with any party which approves without a word of criticism the Moscow sentences of blood and their execution, and calls for more actions of a similar nature. Either the Communist Party dissociates itself from the murders of Zinoviev and his companions and therewith wins the right to protest against the murders and tortures of fascism and to further cooperation with the socialist and labor movement—or it approves, as before, the Moscow outrages and cuts a decisive line between us. Either—or! There is no third alternative. The Moscow sentences and their execution are a horrible catastrophe for the working class of all tendencies and a criminal blow against the longed-for ideological and organizational unity of the working class.



# AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF LEON TROTSKY

## *We are working:*

1. To Safeguard Full Democratic Rights of Asylum for Leon Trotsky.
2. To Secure an Impartial Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials.

## *How?*

1. By bringing together all those who agree with our objectives.
2. By mobilizing labor and liberal opinion through mass-meetings, publicity, and dissemination of information on these two issues.
3. By publications. The Committee has already published: "The Witchcraft Trial in Moscow: An Attempt at an Understanding with Georgi Dimitroff," by Friedrich Adler, Secretary of the Labor and Socialist International, and a compilation of world labor and liberal opinion on the Moscow Trial, entitled "Voices on the Moscow Trial" as well as a regular News Bulletin.
4. By securing the endorsement and active cooperation of labor and other organizations. The National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party and many prominent trade unionists have endorsed our work.
5. By collaborating with similar committees in Canada, Mexico and Europe.

## *How you can help:*

1. Join the Committee and get your friends to do so.
2. Buy and distribute our publications.
3. Circulate our petitions and collection lists.
4. Please contribute to our work.

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