

Workers of The World Unite

FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

THE MOSCOW TRIAL

STALIN WIPES OUT THE LEADERS OF THE
OCTOBER REVOLUTION

A monstrous accusation has been made. Trotsky, leader with Lenin of the Russian revolution, is accused of conspiring to kill Stalin and overthrow the government by acts of terrorism! Trotsky, a standard-bearer of the world revolution and formerly at the head of the Red Army, is alleged to be the arch-villain of a counter-revolutionary plot!

Trotsky's writings since his exile give both the lie and the key to the grotesque parade of falsification in the Moscow court. From those writings—and from Trotsky's whole life—comes a clear picture of one upholding the principles of Marx and Lenin, uncompromising in adherence to internationalism, unbending in opposition to the nationalistic policy of Stalin. In the many dozens of polemics, pamphlets and articles that Trotsky has written since his struggle against Stalin's bureaucracy began, there is not one sentence with even a suspicion of counter-revolutionary sentiments. The writings of Trotsky are never quoted by his enemies, for they breathe the very essence of revolutionary internationalism.

What then is the evidence, if any, against Trotsky? It consists primarily of the interminable repetition of epithets. "Counter-revolutionary", "renegade", "traitor", and now "murderer" are the favourite terms of abuse, in a situation where abuse has been elaborated into a powerful weapon of political persecution.

But now there is more than abuse. There are also the pitiful "confessions" of former associates of Trotsky, who were prominent figures of the proletarian revolution. What are we to make of "confessions" whose abject self-castigation reaches the limit of asking for death? What happened to Kamenev, who repeated parrot-fashion to the Public Prosecutor that he was "the most bloodthirsty murderer of the lot", or to Tomsky, who did more than ask for death rather than face a trial? What has happened to nearly all the best-known figures of the Russian revolution—to Rykov, Bukharin, Sokolnikov, Piatakov, etc.—who are involved in this sweeping round-up of "criminals", "mad dogs", "reptiles", etc.? Can it be that they have one and all become counter-revolutionaries?

To ask the last question is to answer it. The idea is absurd. Yet behind the absurdity is tragedy. For without doubt most of these men dared to speak critically of Stalin, and have been dissatisfied with his dominance over the bureaucracy of which they formed a part. Now in

court their criticisms have become plots to murder, and their personal opposition to Stalin, treachery to the working class. Mental and physical pressure of the sharpest and most nerve-wracking kind transformed the accused into mere wrecks of men, whose spineless acquiescence in falsehood included their own persons. Kamenev, weak shadow of a revolutionary, solemnly painted himself "bloodthirsty".

Without some powerful social force acting upon them, the accused would have lacked even the vestiges of critical opposition to Stalin that brought them into court. And without some important reason Stalin would not have gone to the length of sentencing to death individuals whose impotence as critics had already condemned them to imprisonment, exile or lowered positions in the state apparatus of government.

Was that social force acting on the accused a capitalist one? Could these one-time associates of Lenin hope to gain from a return of capitalism? Hardly! No Tsarist general or bourgeois financier would employ these men except as material for the hangmen. Such criticisms against Stalin as they may have made would give them no credit account in the banks of a counter revolution. What then was the social force that made the accused important enough to die by order of the Russian government?

There is no doubt that the social force responsible was and is the mass discontent of a section of the Russian working class—and moreover of a politically advanced section, with a deep attachment to the cause of the world revolution. In recent years, *thousands* of these workers have been arrested, imprisoned and exiled by Stalin's government, for venturing to oppose its narrow, nationalistic policy, its neglect of internationalist principles, and the whole series of basic errors arising from its doctrine of "socialism in one country". The appalling accounts of the communists A. Tarov and Dr. A. Ciliga (formerly a leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party), who escaped from the Soviet Union after imprisonment, have revealed something of the struggle that is going on between the bureaucracy and the more politically conscious workers.

The bureaucracy of Russian has become a caste, which, while at the helm of a working class state, drives that state towards destruction—not deliberately, but by reason of the deep objective errors which a nationalistic policy entails.

During the period of the first five-year plan the most advanced workers, burdened and occupied by the conditions and tasks during that period, were easily held in check by the repressive apparatus of the state and saw their only way out in the building up of industry. As a result of the successes of the Five Year Plan, the last few years have brought considerable betterment in the living standards of the workers as compared with the previous period. It is upon the basis of this betterment of material conditions and upon the consequent turning of the attention of the workers from questions of bread and butter to political problems that has arisen the recent mass discontent with autocratic authority of the bureaucracy. The position of the bureaucracy is now being challenged by thousands of revolutionaries loyal to the proletarian revolution, who believe that its salvation and completion can come only through a policy more or less in line with that of Trotsky. This is shown by the recent expulsion of three hundred thousand members from the C.P.S.U. and by the exile of twenty thousand workers accused of "counter-revolutionary Trotskyism" in the Autumn of 1935. And in addition thousands of other workers, particularly of the youth, are confusedly discontented with the repressive weight of the bureaucracy (only recently the Young Communist League was transformed by the bureaucracy from a formally autonomous political body into a purely "propagandist" organisation, bereft of independent political weight).

It was the mass of discontented workers of many shades of opinion that lent significance to the disgruntled personnel included in the government apparatus, especially as the disgruntled possessed names reminiscent of the triumphs of the 1917 revolution. Around Bukharin, Rykov, Zinoviev, Kamenev and others might have crystallised mass discontent which eventually would have overwhelmed Stalin, "the beloved leader".

Stalin decided to kill two birds with one stone. The old-time leaders lacked contact with the masses, and were weak too because they had no political platform. They were easily dealt with. And through their arrest and trial, Stalin was able to strike at those he most hated and feared—the "Trotskyists", who had their principles, their platform, and their international organisation in some fifteen countries.

To link Zinoviev, Kamenev, etc. with Trotsky was thus doubly advantageous to Stalin, whose faked conspiracy mixed historically correct opponents with the contents of his own private dust-bin of political discards. The German Nazi police was thrown in to sweeten the mixture for popular consumption. The "confessions" of the accused gave colour to the whole affair, *which was staged while the Spanish proletariat was fighting for its life.*

THE INTERNATIONAL ASPECT.

The struggle of the Spanish workers and peasants has roused the whole of Europe, and the workers of Russia have not missed its inspiring effect. While the Russian government hid behind "neutrality" over Spain, the Russian workers spontaneously expressed their sympathy with half a million pounds for their hard-pressed comrades abroad. The internationalism of the Russian masses was kindled. The limitations of Stalin's conception of "Socialism in one country" were threatened. The world revolution touched the Russian proletariat with dynamic force.

History had obviously begun to turn again to the road of "Trotskyism", to the road, that is, of Marx and Lenin. Therefore Stalin staged his trial, dragged a red herring across the beckoning trail, leaving the world revolution to look after itself. Spain could wait while Stalin saw to his own "collective security".

There is also an international aspect to the trial. As an inevitable result of their own position as a bureaucratic caste raised above the masses, Stalin and his clique have lost all faith in the power of the workers in the foreign countries to defend the Soviet Union, and put their hope in liberal elements among the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. The recent trial is intended to demonstrate to the international bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie that, to use the words of a recent writer in "The News Chronicle" (27. 8. 36) "Bolshevism is dead", and that the existing regime in the U.S.S.R. does not menace them or their property.

It is not the first time that an attempt had been made to implicate "Trotskyists" with counter-revolutionary elements. In 1926 one of the political police "planted" Left Opposition literature on a youth. The police agent was formerly a White officer in Wrangel's army. Hence a cock-and-bull story was fabricated. The Left Opposition was intriguing with a counter-revolutionary Wrangel officer! (That the ex-officer was an employee of the police was allowed to pass!).

More recently the assassination of Kirov, the act of a confused and misguided Communist Party member, Nikolayev, was attributed in the party press to Trotsky's influence. On this assassination, which could be traced to the discontent among the youth with the steam-roller methods of Stalin's bureaucracy, Trotsky wrote as follows, quoting first his own article of 1911 on terrorism against the capital state (published in that year in the Austrian paper "Kampf"):

TROTSKY ON TERRORISM.

"Does a terrorist attempt, even if successful, bring confusion into the leading circles or not? That depends on the concrete political circumstances. In any case such confusion can only be temporary; the capitalist state leans only on ministers and cannot be destroyed by destroying them. The classes which it serves can always find themselves new people—the mechanism as a whole remains and goes on with its work.

"But a much greater confusion is brought into the ranks of the working masses themselves by terrorist actions. If it is only necessary to arm oneself with a pistol in order to attain one's objective, then why exert oneself in the class-struggle? If it is possible to frighten the people at the top by the sound of a shot, then why the Party?"

"Right now, 23 years later, I have nothing to add to this article (of 1911), which opposes to terrorist adventurism the method of preparing the proletariat for the Socialist revolution. But if the Marxists rigidly condemned individual terrorism—for political and not mystical reasons of course—even at that time, when the shots were aimed against the agents of the Tsarist government and of capitalist exploitation, how much more relentlessly would they judge and reject the criminal adventurism of attempts directed against the bureaucratic representatives of the first

Workers' state in history. The subjective motives of Nikolayev and his co-thinkers are of no consequence to us. The road to hell is paved with the best of intentions. Until the Soviet bureaucracy is overcome by the proletariat—and this task will be fulfilled—until such time it fulfils the necessary function in guarding the workers' state. If terrorism of the Nikolayev type appears, it can only mean, in the absence of other unfavourable conditions, the action of fascist counter-revolution.

To try to mix Nikolayev up with the Left Opposition . . . can only be the act of political swindlers who take people for fools. The terrorist organisation of the Communist youth was born not of the Left Opposition but of the bureaucracy and its internal decomposition. *Individual terrorism is in its essence bureaucracy turned inside out* . . . The bureaucracy does not rely on the masses, trying to replace them by itself. The Stalinist bureaucracy founded the repulsive cult of leaders, giving them god-like traits. The religion of 'heroes' is also the religion of terrorism, although with a minus sign. The Nikolayevs imagine that it is enough to kill a few leaders with the aid of a revolver to change the course of history . . . " ("The Stalinist Bureaucracy and the Assassination of Kirov", December 28th, 1934).

In the above pamphlet Trotsky showed clearly how false is the assertion that the Soviet Union has already the socialism of a classless society. While tremendous economic and cultural progress has been made, while the fundamental pre-requisites for the construction of socialism are held by the working class, yet to say that the Soviet Union has "entered into socialism" is to discredit socialism and all it stands for. Socialism means enough for all, the end of individual competition for the necessities and luxuries of life, and a general standard of living incomparably higher than that of the most advanced capitalist country. When the Soviet Union is able to provide every worker with material wealth and cultural facilities beyond that of any highly paid skilled worker of the United States, for example, it will be possible to speak of socialism in the Soviet Union, and not merely the foundations of Socialism. But the bureaucracy mistakes the foundations for the building itself, and in doing so spreads confusion in the working class.

It is not only economic backwardness and its attendant difficulties with which the Russian workers have to deal. There are also difficulties of another kind, coming from the repressions, stupidities and errors of their own bureaucracy. *How* to deal successfully with these latter difficulties is something not yet mastered by the workers. Hence the mad acts of the Nikolayevs; the present fantastic trial and its assistance to Stalin's grasp of bureaucratic power; the partial separation between the mass of acquiescent workers and those whose critical faculties and internationalist opinions have earned them the hatred of the bureaucracy.

Hence also the double role of the bureaucracy, which on the one hand *attempts* to defend the conquests of the 1917 revolution—in its own fashion, and on the other hand conducts a policy leading in actuality towards the destruction of the Soviet Union by the forces of world imperialism. The resistance of the bureaucracy to capitalist elements within the U.S.S.R. is accompanied by a squeezing out of what remains of workers' democracy. And the fight against counter-revolutionaries within the

country is bound up with persecution of comrades loyal to communism, whose only crime is belief in the teachings of Marx and Lenin on the international character of socialism.

TROTSKY REPLIES.

The main stream of lying abuse from the Public Prosecutor of the trial was directed against Trotsky. Alone in Norway, the exiled revolutionary made a dignified reply, partially reported as follows in *The New Leader* (21. 8. 36).

"The ruling bureaucracy calls every criticism directed against it a conspiracy. I assume that criticism is spreading to wider and wider circles in the Soviet Union. This phenomenon I can only greet with joy. It is quite possible that many, and quite diverse, elements who represent this critical feeling have referred to my name i.e. to my ideas and writings. But the 'Tass' report also declares that the charges are concerned with a terroristic plot against the leaders of the regime, and that this conspiracy is directed by me from Norway.

"I herewith declare that this contention does not contain an iota of truth. To everyone who is acquainted with recent political history, it is indubitable that the report circulated by 'Tass' stands in sharpest contradiction to my ideas, and to my entire activity, which at the present time is devoted exclusively to writing . . .

"I emphatically assert that since I have been in Norway I have had no connections with the Soviet Union—nor have I received a single letter from the Soviet Union, neither have I written a single letter to anybody there, either directly or through other persons.

"My sole activity in connection with the Soviet Union has been restricted to the writing of articles which were published in the World Press, and to a book which will be published in the near future in several countries. My wife and I have not been able even once to exchange a single line with our son, who has been employed in the Soviet Union in a scientific capacity and who has had no political connections whatsoever . . ."

If adherents of Stalin neither believe the denials of Trotsky nor take the trouble to study his views, the same cannot be said of the bourgeoisie. The latter know enough of Trotsky's real character and sins to refuse him admission to most countries of the earth. Before finding a refuge in Norway, he was hounded out of France by the hostile publicity of the reactionary press. "Le Jour" (17. 4. 34), then referred to him as an "extremist of the left", who "has never departed from the pure state of Bolshevik doctrine". To-day it is the Norwegian conservative newspapers that are leading the campaign for his expulsion from Norway.

Trotsky is harried by bourgeois governments because he has never ceased to work openly for their overthrow by the proletariat, and because he has always openly expressed his support of the Soviet Union as a workers' state. He has many times rebuked those who pretend that the Soviet Union is "hopeless", through the degeneration of its bureaucracy. In his pamphlet *The Soviet Union and the Fourth International* (Pioneer Publishers, 28 East 12th Street, New York, 1934) he wrote:—

"Every political tendency that waves its hand hopelessly

at the Soviet Union under the pretext of its non-proletarian character runs the risk of becoming the passive instrument of imperialism . . . The foreign policies of the bureaucracy supplement the domestic. We fight as much against the one as the other. *But we wage our struggle from the standpoint of defending the workers' state.*"

Because Trotsky would have the Soviet Union defended primarily by revolutionary action of the working class in all capitalist countries, he is vilified as an enemy of the working class by complacent bureaucrats whose socialist outlook is limited by the frontiers of Russia. Because Trotsky would abolish all frontiers, he is slandered by bureaucrats sheltering behind temporary frontiers of working class power. Although these bureaucrats cannot kill Trotsky by law, they invite his assassination by their uncontrolled fury and calumny.

BUREAUCRACY VERSUS THE WORKERS.

A gigantic ferment is going on in Russia, and the froth that has lain stagnant so long on top is disintegrating. The bureaucracy which raised itself above the masses, no longer serves to check the flow of controversial political currents. The Russian revolution no longer screens completely the degenerate heirs of its great leadership. New revolutions abroad are demanding new leaders to assist them from the proletarian citadel of the Soviet Union. The bureaucracy cannot supply these leaders and will not supply that assistance. Therefore ever higher above the bureaucracy climbs the figure of Stalin, concentrating even more power in his person, making himself still more inde-

pendent of the wishes of the masses, focussing on himself still more the limelight of personal publicity.

The victory of workers' democracy requires the end of bureaucratic absolutism such as is exercised in Russia through Stalin's power. Workers' democracy attained its height in the Soviet Union before Lenin died. It can rise to far greater heights of success all over the world with the triumph of the international proletariat. But only if the full sense is realised in practice of Lenin's saying: "Every cook must learn to rule". *Must rule, before cooks and mechanics and labourers and the many millions who toil can deal with the bureaucrats who would usurp the functions of the masses.*

The task of preventing further "trials" of the kind now staged by Stalin is the task of reducing Stalin's bureaucracy to impotence in the face of *workers' control, not only of industrial construction, but also of the intricate machinery of political life and international affairs.*

For this task the party of Stalin, the Third International, plainly will not serve. A new party, a new workers' International, must complete the revolution which has already laid the foundations of socialism in one-sixth of the earth. The new world party will find means to preserve that genuine proletarian democracy which Stalin has crushed so horribly. The Fourth International will raise anew the banner of Marx and Lenin, the banner of the world revolution, the banner of international socialism. It will keep, by the will of its supporters, to the road Stalin has forgotten—the road to a classless society of peace. And with that International will march the spirit of Trotsky.

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