



# STALIN'S RUSSIA

*By*

*Louis Fischer*



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## STALIN'S RUSSIA

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## STALIN'S RUSSIA

BY

LOUIS FISCHER

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Stalin's Russia

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# INTRODUCTION

By Lalita Kumarappa

It is not strange that Louis Fischer is considered one of the best known writers and international journalists of the present day, for he has been a familiar figure in most of the European Capitals, and has associated with leaders in politics for two decades. For some years Fischer was "one of the ablest of those lecturers and writers whose balance sheet of judgment was definitely favourable to the Soviet regime." But his long stay in Russia, and first-hand experience made him less pro-Bolshevik with the passing of time, though he is still an admirer of the country. The mass purges of old communists—among whom were several of his friends—and the blackmail and graft he encountered in getting his family out of the U.S.S.R., shook his faith, and changed some of his beliefs. This change in his appreciation of Soviet Russia, is seen in the transition period between 1931 and 1941. In the end, Fischer gives his allegiance to the ideal of liberty and writes :

"I have lived in all the major dictatorships—Russia, Germany, and Italy. My experience teaches me that democracy, with all its faults, is better than any of these. My experience teaches me that the maintenance of personal freedom should be the primary consideration of every human being. It is never a choice between freedom and a full stomach. No dictatorship has given either. Only men and women

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who have freedom and who have not seen it abolished in dictatorships can fail to understand what it means to be deprived of it."

Perhaps it is characteristic of Mr. Fischer that he should land in the Karachi air-port in a bomber. While in India, his stay was crowded with interesting meetings with various prominent people. He was introduced to Gandhiji, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Viceroy, and the Commander-in-Chief. He also had the pleasure of meeting Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, the Governor of Bombay—Sir Roger Lumley,—the Presidents of the Muslim League, and the Hindu Mahasabha, and many others. Our Editor, Mr. Yusuf Meherally, was charmed with Louis Fischer's frank manner, informal friendly behaviour, and utter disregard for his own personal appearance. But, above all, he was taken up with the author's great personal integrity, and his wish for writing about events and people exactly as they were, without any apologies or explanations for defects. Mr. Meherally liked Louis Fischer's *Men and Politics*; in fact, was so greatly impressed with the book that he asked for Mr. Fischer's permission to publish extracts out of it in booklet form; cheaply, and within the reach of the average Indian who wanted to get more information about Russia, since she is playing an important part in moulding the future of world history.

The first such booklet was *Lenin's Russia*; the second, *Stalin's Russia*, i.e., our present pamphlet

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is a sequel to it. We offer it in the hope that it will help those wishing to follow up the reorganization of old Russia under the various Bolshevik leaders. Stalin has undertaken a gigantic burden, one, which the rest of the world together could not even conceive in all its vastness—the two Five Year Plans! These two little booklets we have published, give excellent pen-and-ink sketches of Lenin and Stalin, so different in physical appearance, personality, and general diplomatic and military tactics. While the mass seems to have loved the jovial, and apparently easy-going Lenin, they admire, but fear the stern, morose, and over-powering Stalin, with his crafty eyes, deep pock-marks over his face, and a low forehead, as Mr. Fischer aptly and vividly describes him. Stalin is absolutely ruthless in achieving his ends; everything is sacrificed to gain them. These differences between the two men are cleverly pointed up in anecdotal fashion, and many little stories are related; they help to keep the reader spell-bound throughout the book which is written in a narrative fashion.



# STALIN'S RUSSIA

There is a statue of liberty in Moscow. It stands opposite the building of the Moscow Soviet, and on its base is inscribed the text of the Soviet Constitution.

Even the rigidly dictatorial Bolsheviks have painted freedom and democracy as their goals. Freedom has always been man's great ideal.

## FREEDOM UNDER DICTATORSHIPS

The experience of the Soviet Union and of all dictatorships has demonstrated that without freedom there can be no full stomachs. Nor can there be any economic security without civil rights. What is a job when you can be lifted out of it by the secret police on no charge or on an unknown charge and imprisoned or shot without open trial and without friends or relatives knowing anything about you? Sometimes a Soviet official disappears in the night. His wife immediately begins leaving food parcels for him at the GPU prison. She has asked no questions because she will get no answers. Then one day, the guard at the gate rejects her parcel. That is how she learns that her husband has been shot. She never sees the body.

Citizens of dictatorships want most of all to be free. In 1935, when Moscow announced a forthcoming constitution which would introduce new liberties, real happiness pervaded the land.

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It is possible to explain or excuse a dictatorship or condone its sins. But nobody except those who dictate ever like a dictatorship. I was pro-Soviet despite the dictatorship. I knew its crimes better than most because I mingled with Russians more than most foreigners. But I always looked forward to the growth of democracy at the expense of dictatorship.

I realized the difficulties. Democracy was not born overnight in England or France.

Russia's cultural backwardness militates against democracy. In 1930, I went to Kazakhstan to witness the opening of the Turkestan-Siberian railway. It traverses country through which the legions of Ghenghis Khan and Tamerlane marched to India. It is on the borders of China. The railway was built, for the most part through desert, by kulaks from Russia and by moon-faced Kazaks. Those Kazaks had never seen a railroad. Bill Shatoff, Chicago I. W. W. who supervised the job, said that the men had lady fingers from riding horses all their lives. Women do the hard work among the Kazaks. I visited Samarkand, Bokhara, and Tashkent. I stood by the tomb of Tamerlane.

I had gone down in a special train with foreign correspondents Duranty, Lyons, Jim Mills, Mollie Cogswell, William Henry Chamberlin, Deuss, Smolar, Baseches, and several Germans who were afraid to ride across one of the new railway bridges and walked over while Americans, including Mrs. Eugene Lyons, rode jubilantly on the locomotive fender—and with

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a group of Soviet authors, among them Pilniak, Leonov, and Vsevolod Ivanov. The train had a de luxe diner with large mirrors in its walls. At station stops, the Kazak women came on board, and when they discovered the mirrors they were mad with delight. They had never before seen their reflections. Mirrors had not yet reached them; and they could not see their features in water because they inhabited a waterless plain. The Kazaks were just graduating from the nomad stage of civilization, but many of them still followed their flocks, and the Soviet Government sent peripatetic hospitals after them, and whenever the Kazaks pitched their cylindrical felt yurts the hospitals halted to administer medical aid. What does democracy, what do votes, mean to such people? Nothing.

Liberty meant nothing to the Kazaks because they always enjoyed it and nobody had yet taken it away from them. The Moscow professor who needed freedom had much less than a Kazak. But the professor, taught by centuries of Russian oppression, made no demands. Russia's tradition of terror, Russia's vast sparsely settled areas, and Russia's low level of culture facilitated the work of the Bolshevik dictatorship. There was no active pressure from below for democracy. The Constitution was a gift from Olympus.

My article in *The Nation*, June 17, 1936, was the first printed anywhere in the world to reveal the contents of the new "Stalinist" Constitution. I had sent it from Moscow by mail and begged *The Nation* to use it without delay. The credit, however, is

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scarcely mine. Karl Radek simply told me about it. He said very little. But it enabled me to talk knowingly to Bukharin about the Constitution, and Bukharin, seeing I was informed, divulged more data on the document. So did Mikhalsky, like Bukharin and Radek a member of the constitutional Drafting Commission. Then I went back to Radek and he, thinking he had given me all the facts I had, must have felt there was no use keeping the secret and spilled some more.

In the discussion that followed, I said to Radek, "The question of the Constitution is a question of the GPU."

Radek is a man who never stops talking and who knows all the answers. If I looked him up after a trip to America, he would ask me my impressions.

I might reply, "It seems to me that Roosevelt is facing a difficult choice." Whereupon Radek would explain in a half hour torrent just what Roosevelt's policy was and where America stood. But when I said, "The question of the Constitution is a question of the GUP, he was dumb-struck. He walked up and down the room for full two minutes and then exploded, "You are right."

The Soviet Constitution of 1936 is a significant State paper despite the fact that it has been honoured in the breach. The practical results of its loud promulgation have been disappointingly negative. But the reasons for its failure supply the key to the pre-requisites of success.

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*The Constitution*, now the supreme law of the Soviet Union does two things: it describes a system of government and it enunciates a bill of rights. The bill of rights is inspiring. But there is nothing in the system of government to safeguard the rights. The popular enjoyment of the rights therefore depends on the goodwill of the persons or person who control the government, and they have chosen to ignore the rights. One of the latest violations of the bill of rights is the introduction of payment for tuition in high schools and colleges. This contravenes Article 121 of the Constitution which says, "Citizens of the Soviet Union have a right to education. This right is implemented by university education." The government did not ask the people or parliament whether it could introduce paid education. The Constitution was not amended to allow paid education. The government simply decreed paid tuition by ukase and that is all there was to it except for the pain in the hearts of many silent people.

### FREEDOM—A FARCE

How could anybody protest? The bill of rights in the Constitution grants and "guarantees by law" "freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and meeting, and freedom of the marches and demonstrations." In life, these liberties are non-existent. If a citizen were to try to publish an article or letter or make a speech attacking the Soviet Government for violating the Constitution by instituting paid tuition, he would soon find himself in jail.

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When the state or its subsidiaries own all the radio broadcasting stations, printing presses, printing paper, and meeting halls and when one party directs the state, civil rights are illusory. They can be suspended with impunity. The Constitution grants "the right to labour," "the right to leisure," "the right to old-age care," equality to women, and equality of race and nationality. Some of these rights do actually exist, and they are important. But not one of them is inalienable. They are all at the mercy of the dictator and could be scrapped without a squeak from the people. Indeed, such is the terror and the perversion of education, that men rise up to applaud whenever privileges are abridged or annulled.

### DEMOCRACY—ITS MEANING

The essence of democracy is the effective right to criticize, oppose, and oust the government in office and substitute another government based on another party or parties. The Soviet regime permits only a single political party. The trouble with democracy in the West is that the political parties on which it rests are frequently so corrupt, unrepresentative, and supine. But even where the ruling class, in the political garb of one party or the other, has an almost permanent tenure in office, the existence of an organized opposition, of free trade unions and of a free press, exercises a salutary sobering influence on government. Labour in the United States, for instance, has no major nation-wide party of its own, yet the competition between the Democratic and Republican

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parties, both of them capitalistic, impels them to consider the wishes and often yields to the pressure of labour whose votes might swing an election. As long as there are free elections a minority can fight. Indeed, where the rivalry between majority party and minority party is keen, a second minority, political or religious or professional, may dictate policy.

In the Soviet Union, there is no protection for a political minority. Therefore, there is no guarantee of democracy. There can be no democracy without a guarantee of democracy.

In the Soviet Union, political opponents and political minorities are purged by shooting, exile, or imprisonment. Purges are a permanent feature of dictatorship. They are the dictatorship's substitute for real elections.

The virility and viability of a democracy are determined by the relationship between executive, legislative, and judicial divisions of the state.

In most democracies—those that remain—parliament, fearing encroachment on its powers, is jealous of a strong executive. Actually, democracy has been destroyed where the executive was weak. In Germany and Italy, Fascism triumphed when hopelessly divided, obstreperous parliaments hampered and thwarted pusillanimous executives. A forceful chief-executive can serve as a bulwark against dictatorship.

In Russia, however, the salutary give-and-take and friendly rivalry and balance between executive and

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legislative departments have never entered into popular experience. Czarist Russia never knew parliamentarianism. The Duma was unimportant in national life. The Czarist administration was weak. The Kerensky government lacked backbone. Russia yearned for powerful leadership that would keep the country on an even keel. The Bolsheviks preached dictatorship and the nation accepted dictatorship as the inescapable alternative to chaos.

The voice of the people was to be expressed through the Soviets. But Soviets are executive contrivances. The village soviet is the village's government, and the city soviet is city hall. Independent legislatures reflecting the will of the people were never a feature of Bolshevik ideas or intentions. The Bolsheviks regard checks and balances as time-wasters.

The Constitution of 1936 did not change this in the slightest. Parliament does not control the executive departments. It merely elects them. But the dictator, elected by no one, runs the elections. He is chief executive because he holds in his hand all the sources, of real power—secret police, army, party treasury, propaganda. The courts, when they function at all are subservient to the executive.

The Constitution of 1936 did nothing to curb the dictator. How could it? He wrote it.

### **BENEFITS UNDER THE CONSTITUTION**

Nevertheless, the Constitution was not all empty words and hollow promises. It gave the peasants equal voting rights with the workingmen; theretofore.



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the vote of a factory hand had been worth five votes of a farm hand. It also restored the franchise to priests, former kulaks, and former officials of the Czarist regime.

At a meeting in the Kremlin of collectivized peasants, a farm boy making a speech revealed that his father had been a kulak. Without rising from his seat, Stalin exclaimed, "It doesn't matter whose son you are but who *you are* and how you work." This reversed the cruel soviet practice of visiting the sins of the fathers on their children. The audience broke into cheers.

The internal enemy, defeated, could be treated with a touch of charity. That is why the Constitution looked like a new departure. Where there is less fear there can be more freedom. The chief change registered by the Constitution was the absorption of the peasantry—seventy per cent. of the population—into the Socialist system. Collectivization enabled Moscow to control the country's farms. It could never have controlled, 130,000,000 individual peasants.

Collectivization, costly and bloody, promised to give Russia bread and rid it of famine. It promised to mitigate the fierce struggle between city and countryside. It promised domestic pacification. Hence the Constitution.

The Constitution was an attempt to stimulate peasant loyalty to the Soviet regime and to win over recalcitrant elements in the towns. The emphasis of

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Soviet propaganda now ceased to be upon Communist party supremacy and upon class rule. On May 4th, 1935, Stalin drank a toast at a Kremlin reception of Red Army commanders to "non-party Bolsheviks." A non-member of the Communist party could be a Bolshevik. The Communist party thereby officially lost the political pre-eminence which it had already lost in fact. The Young Communist League had been told to keep out of politics. The Old Bolsheviks Society was suppressed. Non-Communists were being appointed to important industrial jobs. The regime charged leading Communists with sabotage and treachery. The Communist party was being purged continuously. That undermined its prestige.

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The Communist party was now merged with the government. Lenin and Bukharin had always insisted on a strict demarcation between the functions of the party and those of the government so that the party could check, direct, and watch the government. But now party and government became one in personnel. Nobody could criticize the government from the outside, from party headquarters. *Izvestia*, the daily organ of the government, began to look like a carbon copy of *Pravda*, the daily organ of the party. Most of the important men in the party held pivotal government posts. Almost all, in fact, except—Stalin. He was not a government official. He was a party official. That enabled him to condemn the governments' mistakes while refreshing responsibility for them. He was the check and balance on the government;

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he alone. By merging the party with the state apparatus, Stalin enhanced his own power and destroyed the Communist party as an unique revolutionary instrument

Thus the very same process which democratically equalized peasants with workers and non-Communists with Communists also lifted Stalin higher towards his goal of personal dictatorship.

The Constitution crowned a development which increased the political weight of the peasantry and of non-Communists. It was therefore a move to the Right, to conservatism. In literature, art, international affairs, and home politics the trend was likewise towards conservatism.

Stalin was attempting to dismantle the class state established in 1917 and create a nation. He wished to eliminate centrifugal, disruptive influences and substitute unity. He was impressed by the power which whipped-up nationalism gave Hitler and he wanted to acquire a similar power. He did not know how to do it. He tried the history as a means to his end. He tried unifying patriotism. He tried to revive old traditions. He has even endeavoured to brighten the memories of Czarist Russia and to regain the territories of Czarist Russia.

Stalin is the great centralizer. The central core of the Soviet Union is the old Russia of the ethnical unit called Great Russia. There are an estimated sixty-eight million Great Russians. But to the south are

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twenty-five million Ukrainians; to the west four million White Russians; on the Volga are the Tatars, Chuvashi, Mordvinians, and a host of other minor nationalities; in the warm Caucasus live eight million Georgians, Armenians, and Turks; Siberia has scores of nationalities.

### **RUSSIAN NATION—AS SUCH—NON-EXISTENT TILL 1917**

To these non-Russians and to millions of Russian workingmen and peasants, the Russian nation had never meant anything. Nationalism and patriotism before the Revolution did not exist for them. The Czarist government was the symbol of oppression. There had been, up to 1917, a Russian nation in name, but not in fact.

Leninism is the doctrine of internationalism. The Soviet regime had always refrained from teaching patriotism or any type of nationalism. "Workers of the world, unite" was Moscow's primary slogan. If Soviet citizens boasted of Soviet achievements they attributed them to the superiority of Socialist methods and ideas, never to the fact that those methods and ideas were being applied in Russia. On the contrary, they always deplored the fact that backward Russia was the first country to introduce Socialism. In Germany, England, or America, they asserted, it would have brought better fruit.

### **BIRTH OF PATRIOTISM AND NATIONALISM**

Yet, beginning in 1935, first hesitantly, and then in roaring crescendo, the Soviet propaganda orchestra

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played patriotic themes, the word *rodina*—fatherland—emerged into official usage; not “socialist fatherland” as before, but simply fatherland. Poets sang “to our beautiful country.” Editorials in 1935 urged “love of country”. On May 1st, 1935, an article by Vasilkovsky said: “There is no more grateful task and no more important political task than to encourage and fan the sacred flame of love of fatherland”. Such terms were once anathema to Bolsheviks. D. Zaslavsky, an official journalist, says, these words “once hated by millions, have lost their old meaning . . . . . They sound different now”. I doubt it. They still sounded reactionary to Soviet ears.

The new emphasis on “Soviet patriotism” was quickly followed by something far worse: Russian nationalism. This conformed to Stalin’s strategy of doing a job in two or more instalments. The first stage was called “Soviet patriotism”. The second stage was Russian nationalism.

The campaign commenced with a bang in 1937. An editorial in the *Pravda* of January 15th, 1937, was entitled, “The Great Russian People”. It of course quoted Marx to prove the point of the greatness of the Russian people, and it attacked Hitler. “We love our homeland”, it said. “We love our great, strong and picturesque Russian language. It is becoming an international language”. But what about the scores of millions of Soviet Citizens who were not Russians?

Sergei Eisenstein, with no great enthusiasm, was then working on his *Alexander Nevsky* film about a

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great battle on the ice of Lake Peipus (Chudskoe) in the thirteenth century between Russians under Nevsky and Teuton knights in armour. Unfortunately, Karl Marx had referred to this Baltic combat in one of his many writings, and this quotation was used repeatedly by the Soviet press in an effort to instil nationalistic and anti-German feelings. That was the purpose of the Eisenstein picture.

Glinka, whom *Pravda* proudly called "the creator of Russian national opera", had written *A Life for the Czar* which the students in pre-revolutionary days always booed from the gallery. The Czarist regime regarded it as a patriotic opera. The Big Theatre in Moscow prepared now to perform it under a new title. *Ivan Susanin*, the name of the hero. *Pravda* linked this performance, like everything else, with Stalin. It was part of his "orders to create a Soviet classic opera". So the creation of the Soviet classic opera consisted in changing the name of the chauvinistic Czarist opera.

March 11th, 1937, was the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of a Russian architect named Bazhenov. The Bolshevik press declared that "Bazhenov's talents fill us, Soviet architects, with a feeling of national pride". Stalin was obviously attempting to induce Soviet art and science to drink at the ancient, rather muddy fountain of Russia's past. On March 14th, 1937, an extensive *Pravda* article dealt with the great mathematician Lobachevsky, long dead, "whose discoveries are closely linked with the national nature

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of Russian science". A few days later—this intensity is characteristic of Communist propaganda—*Pravda* devoted another many-column article to Kovalevsky, a Russian paleontologist who died in 1883.

Two days later, *Pravda* launched a violent attack on Professor Pokrovsky, Soviet Russia's leading historian of Czarist Russia, and an old honoured Bolshevik.

When Pokrovsky's *Brief History of Russia* first appeared it was published by the International Publishers of New York in 1933—Lenin wrote him a letter which read, "Comrade Pokrovsky, I congratulate you very heartily on your success. I like your new book *Brief History of Russia* immensely. It reads with tremendous interest. It should, in my opinion, be translated into the European languages". But that was Lenin, and Lenin was dead. Now the Stalin press branded Pokrovsky as an "anti-Marxist". His school had engaged in "wrecking". What were his sins? He spoke of Czarist Russia as a country of "Oblomovs", sluggish and undynamic. He said that the blood of the Great Russians ("Great" ethnographically in contrast to the "Little Russians" or Ukrainians) was eighty per cent Finnish. Pokrovsky, moreover, was not harsh to the invading Tatars. (In the Czarist times there was a tradition of anti-Tatarism which the Soviet regime had formerly rejected). Greatest crime of all: Pokrovsky described Czar Peter the Great as a reactionary. Karl Marx, according to *Pravda*, considered Russia's conquest of the Baltic provinces as a progressive move, whereas Pokrovsky looked upon it as simple robbery. The political purpose of this cam-

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paign now begins to emerge. The re-interpretation of patriotism in 1936 and the re-writing of Russian history in 1937 leads straight to the exploits of the Red Army after the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 23rd, 1939.

The one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the battle of Borodino was celebrated for the first time in Soviet Russia on September 2nd, 1937. Soviet students, the press reported, placed flowers at the monuments of the Russian regiments that stopped Napoleon's army. This was "a glorious page of the past of our country." General Kutuzov, Commander of the Russian army that resisted Napoleon, was lauded highly and in order to make this Czarist Prince—his title was omitted from the propaganda—palatable to a Soviet generation that had grown up to despise him, the press said that Czar Alexander I was envious of and opposed to him. "The Russian nation" said *Pravda*, "saved the independence of the fatherland in 1812. The great conqueror collided with a great nation and was beaten." This anti-Bolshevik version of history was intended to instill confidence in Soviet peoples for the struggle with Hitler. Actually, it sounded like Hitlerism and very little like the language of Bolshevism. It was the language in which the Czarist Russian encyclopaedia referred to Napoleon and Prince Kutuzov.

### DRIVE FOR MAKING RUSSIAN THE SOVIET LINGUA-FRANCA

Now commenced a heavy barrage for the more extensive employment of the Russian language. Under the Leninist policy towards national minorities, the



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numerous ethnic units of the Soviet federation used their own tongues and learned Russian if they wished. This began to change. "Fascists and Trozkyists" were accused of endeavouring to cleanse the Ukrainian language of "Russianisms". The bourgeois nationalists of the ethnic republics were interfering with the study of the Russian language. But the Russian language had "wonderful richness". It was "a treasury of world culture and had become the property of all the working people of the Soviet peoples". The policy theretofore had been to win the sympathy of Czarist Russia's subject peoples by making them feel they enjoyed cultural autonomy and did not have to speak Russian or accept Russian culture. Stalin was reverting to the hated Czarist policy of Russification which bred revolt in the hearts of non-Russians.

Apparently, Stalin imagined that if Soviet citizens were proud of Kutuzov, Peter the Great and the rout of the Teuton Knights on Eisenstein's artificial ice they would be more loyal to the Bolshevik regime. Instead of meat he was giving them stale circuses.

### NARROW-MINDED STALIN

This whole tendency revealed the narrow limitations of Stalin's mentality and statesmanship. He was searching for new psychological weapons to cement a national solidarity which he must have felt did not exist.

Brittle Marxists may react against concentration on Stalin's person as a clue to Soviet events. There is

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nothing in Marxism which denies the role of the individual in history. He is sometimes the vehicle for social forces. Sometimes he bends them to his purposes. Sometimes he misdirects them. Maybe Hitler is Germany's destiny. But maybe his judgment has been wrong; maybe he has made a mistake. When so much power is centered in one person, when his wishes, bad dreams, bad moods, and bad health influence state decisions it would be blind dogmatism to deny him a major part in his country's history. Without personal history, historic analysis becomes fatalism. Abstract social and economic circumstances are static without the impact of persons aiming to change them. A class or a party can alter history. Why not one man who monopolizes the power of the party and the class?

Suppose Lenin had never lived. Suppose Lenin were still alive. Suppose Stalin and Trotzky had never quarrelled. Soviet history would, of course, be different. Has not the Bolshevik regime fixed its attitude towards persons in accordance with their birth and training? Do not Stalin's origin, biography and personal characteristics influence his acts? They do.

One evening, Stalin and Prime Minister Vyascheslav Molotov went to the opera, sat in a hidden box, and saw *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk* by Shostakovitch, a young man who had been hailed both at home and abroad as Soviet Russia's greatest composer. The opera, which burlesqued the vulgarity and emptiness

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of pre-Revolutionary Russian life, had been running throughout the Soviet Union since the spring of 1934, and had received enthusiastic reviews in the Bolshevik press. Soviet agencies helped to finance performances of it in foreign countries. Whenever prominent foreign musicians or theatre people came to Moscow they were shown *Lady Macbeth*. But now Stalin saw it and didn't like it.

Stalin is about as much of a musician as I am. But since the opera did not find favour in his proletarian highness's ears it was taken off immediately. Two days after he attended the performance, the mighty *Pravda*, January 28th, 1936, printed a smashing attack on Shostakovitch and his art. It was not music at all, just "a leftist muddle". Shostakovitch did not understand what the Soviet audience wanted. (They had packed every performance. He did not understand what Stalin wanted.) He was "formalistic," whatever that implies.

At this signal, all Soviet artists—musicians, authors, scenario writers, playwrights, poets—began beating their breasts in public and announcing that they too had sinned, they too were "formalist", "leftist". The second Moscow Theatre, run by eager experimenters, closed down.

Stalin and Molotov again went to the opera. This time they viewed Djerzhinsky's *Quiet Flows the Don*. They liked its Russian folk tunes. Djerzhinsky was made Soviet idol.

## STALIN'S RUSSIA

### THE BIG STALIN PURGE

I never approved of the big Stalin purge. I did not write a word about the Moscow trials of leading Bolsheviks. I did not condone the trials, nor did I undertake to explain them. Neither did I condemn them. I suspended judgment because I was not sure in my own mind what they were. .

I read the records of the trials when they occurred. I read the opinions of those who regarded them as frame-ups and the statements of those who accepted them as truth. Now I have read the stenographic records of the Moscow court proceedings. I have again studied the literature on both sides. I have a perspective now of the effects of the trials and the purges which I could not have had at the time.

I approached the Moscow trials with considerable scepticism. But it is one thing to have doubts and another to be certain that all the trials were frame-ups based on false evidence and forced admission of guilt.

First of all, why the trials?

Since there is no abstract justice under Bolshevism—no absolute sins, and unfortunately, no absolute virtues—it is necessary to ask what the Soviet regime tried to achieve by the trials. Many Bolsheviks have been executed without trials and the defendants in the trials could have been executed without trials. Why the trials?

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### TROTZKY ON TRIAL

The chief defendant in all the three Moscow trials of leading Bolsheviks was Leon Trotzky. Men sat in the dock and made statements and received sentences. Yet Trotzky was the person the court wished to condemn. The edifice of guilt which the state prosecutor Andre Vishinsky sought to construct was an enormous leaning skyscraper. Its numerous floors and underground cellars were often connected with one another, but sometimes not. Threads from them all ended in the hand of Trotzky. It was a case of remote control.

The scheme, as it emerged from the confession, was this: The Trotzkyists in the Soviet Union would hasten a foreign attack on Russia. The attackers—Germany and Japan—would help Trotzky and his friends to rule defeated Russia. Trotzky would give the Ukraine to Germany and the Far-Eastern provinces and Amur district to Japan. The Germans would also get economic concessions in Russia.

Radek, testifying under the eyes of sixteen co-defendants, the judges of the Supreme Court, the prosecuting attorney Vishinsky, and his assistants, scores of Soviet and foreign journalists, a group of foreign diplomats, and hundreds of Soviet spectators, declared that he had frequently been in touch with Trotzky and received several letters from Trotzky by secret emissaries. "In 1935," said Radek, "the question was raised of going back to capitalism." Vishinsky: "To what limits"?

Radek: "What Trotzky proposed was without limits. To such limits as the enemy might require."

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The enemy was Germany and Japan. Trotzky, according to Radek, advised a complete sell-out to Russia's foes and to world Fascism.

How was this to be achieved? Trotzky wanted the Soviet leaders assassinated, the accused in the three trials deposed. Kill Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov, Kirov, Kaganovitch, Zhdanov, and the others. Commit acts of sabotage. Wreck trains and factories. Blow up bridges. Poison soldiers. Give military information to Berlin and Tokio. Crush Bolshevism. Subjugate Russia. Then Trotzky and his accomplices, as puppets of Hitler and the Mikado, would govern this capitalistic, truncated, weakened Russia.

This was not just a paper scheme. Trotzky himself, it was alleged, had discussed the whole matter with Rudolf Hess, Hitler's first assistant. (Molotov saw Hess in Berlin in November, 1940). They had worked out a plan. Trotzky also had contacts with the Japanese government. In April, 1934, Gregory Sokolnikov—so he reported at the trial—received the Japanese Ambassador in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Sokolnikov was then Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs. At the end of the interview the interpreters went out, and the Ambassador asked Sokolnikov whether he knew that Trotzky had made certain proposals to his government. Sokolnikov replied, "Yes." The Ambassador, you see, was trying to find out whether Trotzky was acting on his personal behalf or whether he had strong backing in Soviet Russia.

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Think of the members of this anti-Bolshevik, pro-Nazi, pro-Japanese conspiracy! Rykov, Prime Minister of the whole country. Yagoda, head of the mighty GPU. Tukhachevsky and his eight leading generals. The Number Two man in Soviet industry. The President and Prime Minister of White Russia. The Prime Minister of the Ukraine. The Prime Minister of Uzbekistan. The Prime Minister of Tadjikistan. The Federal Commissar of Finance. The Federal Commissar of Agriculture. The Secretary of the Soviet Government. The commander of the military guard of the Kremlin. Two assistant commissars of foreign affairs. Several Soviet Ambassadors. Hundreds of factory managers. Each one of these had numerous subordinates. Yagoda could put the entire secret police of the nation at the disposal of the plotters. Tukhachevsky was the key-man in the Red Army.

Why did they fail?

### **ASSASSIN TO KILL STALIN; ATTEMPT A FAILURE**

Fritz David, a German Communist, defendant in the 1936 Zinoviev-Kamenev trial, admitted in the public hearings that Trotzky had chosen him for the "historic mission", of killing Stalin. David actually got to a Third International Congress in Moscow attended by Stalin. He had a Browning revolver in his pocket. But he was too far away to get a good aim, he said.

All right. But Yagoda's men guarded every entrance and exit of the Kremlin and of Stalin's apart-

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ment. They were posted at frequent intervals along the road which leads from Moscow to Stalin's country home. They guarded the country home. Yagoda himself, Tukhachevsky himself, Piatakov, and many other accused had carried arms and were regularly in Stalin's intimate company. Why didn't they kill him? There is no answer. At the trials the question was not even asked. Why hire a poor German Communist for a job of assassination when you have the whole Kremlin guard and army chiefs and the secret police?

From Turkey, France and Norway Trotzky allegedly gave orders, and in Moscow, Leningrad, Siberia and Turkestan they were executed by the highest officials of the Soviet government by men who had signed his deportation order, who had condemned him in speeches and articles, who maligned and swore against him each day. The prosecution thus unwittingly paid a tribute to Trotzky's personality. But Trotzky had branded as a lie every accusation levelled against him at the trials! He called all the trials gigantic frame-ups.

There was in Berlin a swarthy young man named Bukhartsev, correspondent of *Izvestia*, as fervent a Bolshevik as I have ever met. In addition to his work as correspondent, he spied on the Nazis and got young American ladies to help him. But at the trial Bukhartsev testified that he had been a partner in this big pro-Nazi, anti-Bolshevik, Trotzkyist plot to restore capitalism in Russia. In December, 1935 Yuri Piatakov, Soviet Vice-Commissar of Heavy Industry,



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went to Berlin on official business, to buy equipment. Bukhartsev met him and took him to the Tiergarten, Berlin's central park, where they saw one of the Trotzky's undercover men. This man said that Trotzky wished to see Piatakov. He would make all the arrangements. So he got Piatakov a false German passport, chartered a private plane, and Piatakov flew non-stop to Oslo where he talked with Trotzky for two hours. Then he came back to Moscow and reported to Radek and Sokolnikov the details of the conversation. He gave the details to the court. Radek and Sokolnikov confirmed what Piatakov said. He had said it to them at the time.

### TROTZKY DENIES EVERYTHING

But Trotzky denied that he ever met Piatakov in Oslo or anywhere else in 1935 or any other year of his exile. The director of the Oslo airport told newspapermen that no airplane from Berlin, in fact, no foreign airplane, landed on his field in December, 1935. The Norwegian family with whom Trotzky was living swore out affidavits to the effect that Trotzky never received a visit from any Russian, and never went away from them to meet anybody.

Vladimir Romm, a Soviet correspondent in Geneva and Washington, testified in court that he met Trotzky in Paris by secret appointment. He named the place, the Bois de Boulogne. Date: end of July, 1933. Romm went with Trotzky's son, Leo Sedov, to the park and there they met Trotzky. Trotzky gave Romm instructions for Radek. He also gave Romm a letter for

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Radek. The letter was pasted in the cover of Novikov Priboi's novel *Tsusima*. Romm brought the letter to Radek in Moscow. Radek in the witness stand confirmed this testimony by Romm and described the contents of the letter.

But Trotzky swore that he never met Romm, never in his life, never even heard of him, and never wrote any letters to Radek from exile. Romm went all the way from Washington to Moscow on a GPU summons to testify at this trial and to incriminate himself. Since the day he appeared in court he has not been heard of again. He expected trouble before he left America and told his American friends so. They advised him not to go. He went because he could not disobey the GPU. It can compel obedience. It has murdered men abroad. I know that because I know of one case in all its gruesome, bloody particulars.

### HORRIBLE MURDER OF IGNACE REISS

The GPU killed Ludwig. That was the only name by which I knew him. So, when the French press announced in September, 1937, that a Czech named Hans Eberhardt has been killed under mysterious circumstances near Lausanne, I thought nothing more of it. Several months later, I learned that Eberhardt's real name was Ignace Reiss, and that he was Ludwig whom I had known since 1931. I met him in Berlin through German Communists. He was introduced simply as "Ludwig." That was not unusual in such circles and one asked no questions. Ludwig was a round, jovial Polish Jew, with a most keen in-

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telligence. I enjoyed discussing politics with him. He invited me to a cafe once and took me to an expensive one. He also dressed well. His conversation, his interests, his manner made me think he worked for GPU.

When Hitler arrived, Ludwig left Germany. Several times he visited us in Moscow. He was an interesting person and an idealist. In 1935, I met him in Paris. He had made Paris his headquarters. He never told me what he did and I never inquired, but in France he spoke less guardedly and I deduced that he was engaged in military espionage for the Soviet government with special emphasis on Hitler's war preparation. For months he would disappear, and then he telephoned me and met in the cafe of the Hotel Lutetia where I lived, or in a cafe on the Champs Elysees. I also met his wife, a brave intelligent woman. She knew the danger he courted every day. He travelled across Europe on false passports, stole across borders, used false names, and lived illegally in Paris. There was always the possibility that a foreign agent of the German Gestapo would shoot him or that the police of some country would arrest him.

During our Paris meetings in 1936, Ludwig spoke very critically of the Soviet regime. Until then he had been completely loyal and devoted. When I returned from America in June, 1937, he called me up and we had a sitting of several hours. The Zinoviev-Kamenev trial in August, 1936, had deeply upset him. On its heels came the Piatakov-Radek-Sokolnikov trial in January, 1937. Stalin was destroying the old

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revolutionists and, with them, the Revolution, Ludwig stormed. Stalin was using the trials to wipe out all potential rivals and everybody who had even disagreed with him or agreed with Trotzky. Even Hitler did not commit such atrocities, he said. He regarded the Moscow trials as frame-ups and the confessions as fakes.

I warned him to be cautious. If he talked that way he could easily be reported. I suspected how perilous it was for an agent of the secret police to turn against his masters. Since he knew many secrets they would try to destroy him. I would have been even more perturbed about this fine person if I had known then, what I learned subsequently, that he was the chief of the Soviet military intelligence work abroad. When such a man goes anti-Stalin he signs his death warrant.

I pleaded with Ludwig to hold his tongue. I also said to him that there was still Spain and that Russia was aiding Spain. "Not sufficiently," he said.

"Still," I urged, "wait till I come back from Spain. Don't do anything rash until we have another talk." His mood made me think he might kick over the traces.

I never had any way of reaching him. I did not have his address or telephone number. But he always managed to know when I arrived in Paris. This time, on my return from Brunete and Madrid, he got in touch with me immediately. "Don't tell me about Spain. They have shot Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Kork, and the

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others. And Gamarnik committed suicide. Sill. I knew Gamarnik. He would never have committed suicide." All restraint was now gone. He was out-and-out anti-Stalin. He wondered whether Voroshilov would be next.

He talked about his comrades in Moscow. He had worked closely in the GPU with several Polish friends and he realized that whatever he did would react against them. He obviously contemplated some desperate deed, but I had no idea what it might be.

The rest I knew from the officially announced findings of the Swiss police and from Victor Serge's book on Ignace Reiss. Ludwig had worked sixteen years for the GPU. Only on July 17th, 1937, he wrote a letter to the Soviet Government full of vituperation against Stalin and denouncing the purges. He was joining Trotzky, he said. He was returning the decoration he had received for distinguished work on behalf of the Revolution. The courage he had displayed in serving the GPU he now displayed in breaking with it. He wrote the letter and delivered it to the Soviet Embassy in Paris.

### WARNING OF A FRIEND

That evening he sat in his hotel room. The telephone rang. He answered. No one spoke. Five minutes later it rang again. He answered. Not a sound. This happened four times. The GPU employees in Paris who had opened Ludwig's letter had had a council of war that evening to decide on their course of action. One of them, a friend of Ludwig, left the meeting, walked down a boulevard, stopped in a pay

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station, called Ludwig and when Ludwig said "Hello" he hung up. He walked two blocks and telephoned again. Ludwig answered "Hello"; the friend slowly put down the receiver. Then he called again in another pay station, and again. He wanted to make Ludwig uneasy. But he did not dare to speak to him. How did he know whether Ludwig's phone had been tapped by the GPU? If his voice were heard he would be doomed, for he had just come from the meeting which determined the fate of Ludwig, or perhaps the meeting was a trap. Perhaps the GPU was testing him. Perhaps Ludwig was a party to the trap. If he spoke to Ludwig over the telephone the GPU would know that he revealed its secret. Ludwig understood the meaning of these telephone signals. The next morning he took a train for Switzerland. He assumed he would be safer there.

### G. SCHILDBACH TURNS JUDAS

In Lausanne, an old woman friend, Gertrude Schildbach, likewise a GPU agent, visited him. He had talked to her about the pain which the Moscow trials had caused him and she expressed sympathy and understanding. He wanted to talk to her now. He took her out to dinner. After dinner they walked down a country road. An automobile stopped and the men in it, and Gertude Schildbach, pushed Ludwig, into the car. There they opened up on him with submachine guns. He struggled, and under his fingernails the Swiss police found pieces of Miss Schildbach's hair. Then the murderers threw Ludwig's body into the road and abandoned the car.

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I lived in Lutetia until after the second World War commend. And every time I passed the cafe downstairs I thought of Ludwig's body with bullet holes in it lying in a Swiss road.

### ROMM RETURNS TO MOSCOW AND DISAPPEARS

So Vladimir Romm knew he had to go to Moscow when the GPU in Washington told him to go. If he refused he would suffer the consequences. At the trial Romm described in detail his encounter with Trotzky in the Paris Bois. But Trotzky denied it. Trotzky denied any contact with Rudolf Hess, the Nazi leader. He denied any contact with Japan. Trotzky declared he was opposed to personal terror and assassination. Nor did he wish the defeat of the Soviet Union in War. (He did not want to see Russia defeated in Finland.) And of course he was a Communist, anti-Fascist and anti-capitalist, and indignantly disclaimed any wish to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union.

### PROCEDURE OF SOVIET TRIALS

It was for the Soviet prosecutor to prove his charges. He submitted no proofs, no documents, no evidence—except the confessions of defendants and witnesses. All the trials were based on the Statements which the accused made in the preliminary hearings in prison. The procedure in court consisted in getting each defendant to repeat publicly what he had already said in the secret investigation chambers, and in getting other defendants to corroborate these statements. Not one of the witnesses was a free man. Even witness like Romm and Bukhartsev had committed

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crimes against the Soviet state by being in touch with Trotzky.

Everything depends, therefore, on how one looks at the confessions. In ordinary jurisprudence, a confession in itself is not sufficient to convict. Nevertheless a confession is not necessarily untrue.

The men in the dock—not a single woman—had written numerous bright pages in the annals of Bolshevism. Forty years or less they sacrificed and labored for the cause, many by the side of Lenin, many in the company of Stalin. But now they did not merely blacken their records with admission of treachery and counter-revolution. They assassinated their own characters. They spat on their whole lives and dragged their names through the vilest filth.

Take Rakovsky. An old revolutionist and recognized as such by the world and in Russia, he admitted at trial that he betrayed the labour movement before 1917. Also, he was a landlord. "Well, of course I was an exploiter," he exclaimed in the witness stand. He further testified that in 1924, while as Soviet Ambassador in England he signed up as a British spy. Scotland Yard recruited him in a restaurant. Two men just walked up to him and said he had to work for the British intelligence service and he agreed. That is how he described it in court. Then he went into exile as a Trotzkyist, first in Saratov, later in Barnaul. In 1934, he recanted. "This telegram" (of recantation), he said at the trial, "was insincere. I was lying" . . . It was my deliberate intention to



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hide from the party and the government, my association with the (British) intelligence service ever since 1924, and Trotzky's association with the (British) intelligence service since 1926." After this insincere recantation, the Soviet Government sent him on a mission to Tokio. There the Japanese intelligence service recruited him. "I returned from Tokio," he seemed to boast, "with the credentials of a Japanese spy in my pocket."

But that was Rakovsky's complete career. Before the Revolution he was anti-labour and an exploiting capitalist; after the Revolution a spy who conspired against his government and the Revolution. Why did he damn himself for ever in this wise?

The accused were, for the most part, men of big calibre and great intellect and they did not show the least sign of physical torture or of having been drugged or doped. They were keen and quick. They tripped up one another, made brilliant speeches, and displayed good memories. And always they insisted they were traitors and criminals.

Rykov said he worked for the Polish Intelligence Service while Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, Krestinsky said he had been a German spy since 1921, and that he was in Germany's pay while serving as Soviet Ambassador in Berlin. In return for this he received a quarter of a million marks per annum from General von Seeckt, the Commander-in-Chief of the Reichswehr. "I used to take it to Moscow myself and hand it to Trotzky." (He said this in the preliminary

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hearings but omitted it at the trial and Vishinsky himself failed to bring out this quaint bit of testimony regarding the German army's financing of Trotzky). Foreign Trade Commissar Rosengoltz said, he had supplied information on the Soviet air force to General von Seeckt in 1922 on instruction from Trotzky. Other defendants heaped equally damaging admissions upon their heads.

In all this symphony of self-denunciation and self-condemnation only one fully discordant note was struck. Krestinsky, former envoy to Germany, former Assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs had at his arrest, confessed to every crime of which the preliminary investigator accused him. The public trial started on the morning of March 2nd, 1938. All the defendants pleaded guilty, except Krestinsky. He pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutor Vishinsky called Accused Bessonov as the first witness, Bessonov had been Krestinsky's Counselor in Berlin. Under Vishinsky's cross-examination, he declared that he and Krestinsky had engaged in Trotzkyist activity in Germany. Krestinsky summoned to the side of Bessonov to testify, denied Bessonov's statements. Vishinsky reminded him that in the preliminary secret hearings he had admitted his crimes.

"My testimony of June 5th to 9th" Krestinsky affirmed, "is false from beginning to end." He had given false testimony in prison in the first week of his GPU detention. He stuck to it all the time he was in pri-

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son. Why? Here is a clue to the secret of the trials.

Vishinsky : "And then you stuck to it."

Krestinsky : "And then I stuck to it because from personal experience I had arrived at the conviction that before the trial.....I would not succeed in refuting my testimony." Now, in court, he declared he was not a Trotzkyite and not a conspirator or criminal.

Vishinsky called Rosengoltz to the stand.

Vishinsky : "Do you take it that Krestinsky was a Trotzkyite"?

Rosengoltz : "He is a Trotzkyite."

Vishinsky : "Accused Krestinsky, I ask you to listen, because you will be saying that you did not hear." (Krestinsky had previously complained that he could not hear Bessonov's testimony).

Krestinsky : "I don't feel well."

Vishinsky : "If the accused declares that he doesn't feel well, I have no right to question him."

Krestinsky : "I have only to take a pill and I shall be able to continue."

Vishinsky : "Do you request not to be questioned for the present?"

Krestinsky : "For a few minutes."

A few minutes later Krestinsky was back at the stand denying charges and making lengthy intricate explanations in refutation of accusation levelled against

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him by his comrades in the dock. Vishinsky reverted to the question of why Krestinsky had given false testimony in prison. Why did he mislead the prosecutor?

Krestinsky : " I simply considered that if I were to say what I am saying today—that it (his early confession in prison) was not in accordance with the facts—my declaration would not reach the leaders of the Party and the Government."

In other words, he had made his untrue confession in prison because anything else would have been more difficult, and now, before the eyes of the foreign Soviet press he was saying it was all a lie. He was not guilty.

The court adjourned for two hours. Evening session, March 2nd, 1938. More charges are made against Krestinsky and still he disclaims all. " Today I am telling the truth," he insists.

Vishinsky : " Since twelve o'clock?"

Krestinsky : " Yes, in this court."

Court is dismissed. Krestinsky spends the night in his cell. The next morning, hearings are resumed. Krestinsky is not called on that morning. In the evening session, accused Rakovsky reports on conspiratorial connections he had with Krestinsky in the interests of Trotzkyism. Krestinsky thereupon confirms Rakovsky's declarations. He adds, " I fully confirm the testimony I gave in the preliminary investigation." But all day yesterday he had denied that

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testimony. What had happened? Vishinsky also wanted to know. He asked Krestinsky the meaning of this sudden shift since yesterday.

"Yesterday," Krestinsky replied, "under the influence of a momentary keen feeling of false shame evoked by the atmosphere of the dock and the painful impression created by the public reading of the indictment, which was aggravated by my poor health, I could not bring myself to tell the truth. . . . In the face of world public opinion, I had not the strength to admit the truth that I had been conducting a Trotskyite struggle all along . . . I admit my complete responsibility for the treason and treachery I have committed."

After that, for the subsequent eight days of the trial, Krestinsky behaved like all the other defendants and accepted a mountainous burden of guilt.

When did Krestinsky tell the truth, when he retracted his confession on the first day of the trial or when he confirmed it during all the remaining days of the trial? What had happened to Krestinsky between the morning he pleaded not guilty in court and the next evening when he accepted his guilt as he had during the preliminary investigations?

### SPHINX-LIKE YAGODA

How did the authorities extract the confessions from the accused? The man who knew was Yagoda, the head of the GPU for many years. He himself had staged numerous public trials including the trial of

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the Zinoviev-Kamenev group. Now he himself was on trial. And he confessed.

Imagine how much Yagoda might have disclosed! But he sat through the trial, bored and listless and was rarely called on to speak. He did not open his mouth until late on the fifth day of trial even though others had mentioned him and it is normal procedure in Soviet Courts to ask an accused person to corroborate or reject accusations made against him in the witness stand. Brought to his feet on the fifth day by Vishinsky he helped Vishinsky by disputing Bukharin's assertion of innocence in the Kirov murder.

"Both Rykov and Bukharin are telling lies," Yagoda stated, "Rykov and Yenukidze were present at the meeting of the centre where the question of the assassination of S. M. Kirov was discussed."

Vishinsky: "Did the accused Rykov and Bukharin in particular, have any relation to the assassination?"

Yagoda: "A direct relation."

Vishinsky: "Did you?"

Yagoda: "I did."

Then Yagoda sat down and was not heard from again until the seventh day of the public trial. On that day, Drs. Levin and Kazakov, two Soviet physicians, were testifying about their alleged efforts to kill Maxim Gorky, revered Russian author, Menzhinsky, chief of the GPU., Kuibishev, a member of the Politbureau, and Maxim Peshkov, Gorky's son. Levin,

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a venerable man past seventy who had treated Lenin, testified that they had acted on Yagoda's instructions.

Yagoda said it was true he conspired to kill Gorky and Kuibishev but not Peshkov or Menzhinsky. Vishinsky read from Yagoda's preliminary evidence in prison: "But he (Levin) said he had no access to Menzhinsky, that the physician in attendance was Kazakov without whom nothing could be done. I instructed Levin to enlist Kazakov for this purpose."

Vishinsky : "Did you depose this, accused Yagoda?"

Yagoda : "I said that I did. But it is not true."

Vishinsky : "Why did you make this deposition if it is not true?"

Yagoda : "I don't know why."

Vishinsky : "Be seated."

Dr. Kazakov in court described in great detail a conference he had with Yagoda in Yagoda's office and he repeated the instructions Yagoda had then given him. In prison, Yagoda had corroborated Kazakov's information. "I summoned Kazakov and confirmed my orders . . . He did his work. Menzhinsky died," Yagoda had said. But now at the trial Yagoda declared that he had never set eyes on Kazakov before he saw him here in the dock. Vishinsky read out Yagoda's statement in prison.

Vishinsky : "Did you depose this?"

Yagoda : "I did."

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Vishinsky : "Hence you met Kazakov?"

Yagoda : "No."

Vishinsky : "Why did you make a false deposition?"

Yagoda : "Permit me not to answer this question."

Vishinsky : "So you deny that you organised the murder of Menzhinsky?"

Yagoda : "I do."

Vishinsky : "Did you admit it in the deposition?"

Yagoda : "Yes."

The same question came up again. Vishinsky said to Yagoda, "At the preliminary investigation you . . ."

Yagoda : "I lied."

Vishinsky : "Anow now?"

Yagoda : "I am telling the truth."

Vishinsky : "Why did you lie at the preliminary investigation?"

"Yagoda : "I have already said : "permit me not to reply to this question."

Mystery. The man who knew most said least. He could have talked as much as he pleased. He could have explained why he lied. Vishinsky asked him to explain. Yagoda could not have feared incriminating himself. He had admitted enough to justify a death sentence. Then why did he not talk freely ?



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A little episode now occurred in court which lifts the veil behind the secret of the Moscow trials and confessions. Doctor Levin was still in the stand explaining how, on Yagoda's orders, he killed Gorky, Gorky's son, Menzhinsky, and Kuibishev. Any men accused in a Soviet trial may put questions at any time to another accused or to a witness. Yagoda rose. "May I put a question to Levin?" "When Levin finished his testimony," the presiding Chief Justice replied. Normally, Yagoda could have put his question immediately. Yagoda therefore insists: "This concerns Maxim Gorky's death." "When the accused Levin finishes, then by all means," the Chief Justice assured him.

Levin continued with his testimony. When he finished, however, the President did not give Yagoda an opportunity to ask his question. Instead, he adjourned the session for thirty minutes. When the court reconvened after this interval, Yagoda was permitted to put his query to Levin. Yagoda said, "I ask Levin to answer in what year the Kremlin Medical Commission attached him, Levin, to me as my doctor, and to whom else he was attached."

Levin did not remember. That was the end of Yagoda's questioning. He did *not* put that question to Levin about the death of Maxim Gorky. He substituted another irrelevant, unimportant question.

### **THE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE ACCUSED AND THE PROSECUTION**

What happened in that thirty-minute recess? Obviously, Yagoda promised the authorities not to put

the question. This confirms my belief that the key to Moscow trials and confessions is that an understanding existed between the accused and the prosecution. There was an agreement between them on how to run the trial. All the defendants had turned state's witnesses. They did this for a consideration. They were promised their lives. The court would condemn them to death. That was necessary for the sake of public opinion. But they would not be shot. And I, therefore, do not think that all the many leading Bolsheviks who figured as confessed culprits in the Moscow trials were immediately executed. Some may still be alive.

What induced the accused Bolsheviks to enter into a bargain with the authorities?

### **CHOICE OF LIFE IN PREFERENCE TO DEATH**

They were offered the alternative: Confession or Death. Trotzky, who knew many of the accused intimately, and who understood Soviet methods better than anyone outside Russia, said to the American Preliminary Commission of Inquiry—Professor John Dewey, Carleton Beals, Otto Ruehle, Benjamin Stolberg, and Suzanne La Follette—which interrogated him in Mexico in April, 1937, "When anybody has to choose between death at one hundred per cent, and death at ninety-nine per cent when he is in the hands of the GPU, he will choose the ninety-nine per cent against the one hundred per cent." The defendants in the Moscow trials chose the ninety-nine per cent of living death because if they had not confessed they would have been shot immediately.

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- Gollancz : "Twelve Studies on Soviet Russia."

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- Krupaskaya : "Memories of Lenin," Vols. I & II.  
Trotsky, L. : "Lenin."  
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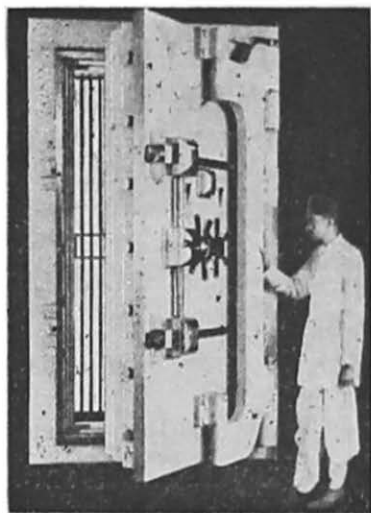
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- Maurice Hindus : "Broken Earth."  
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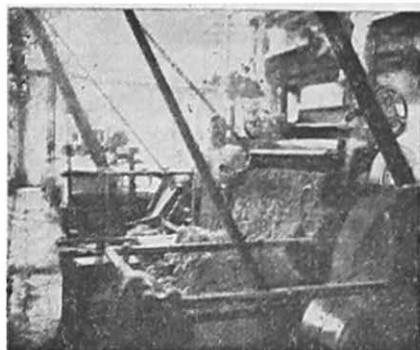
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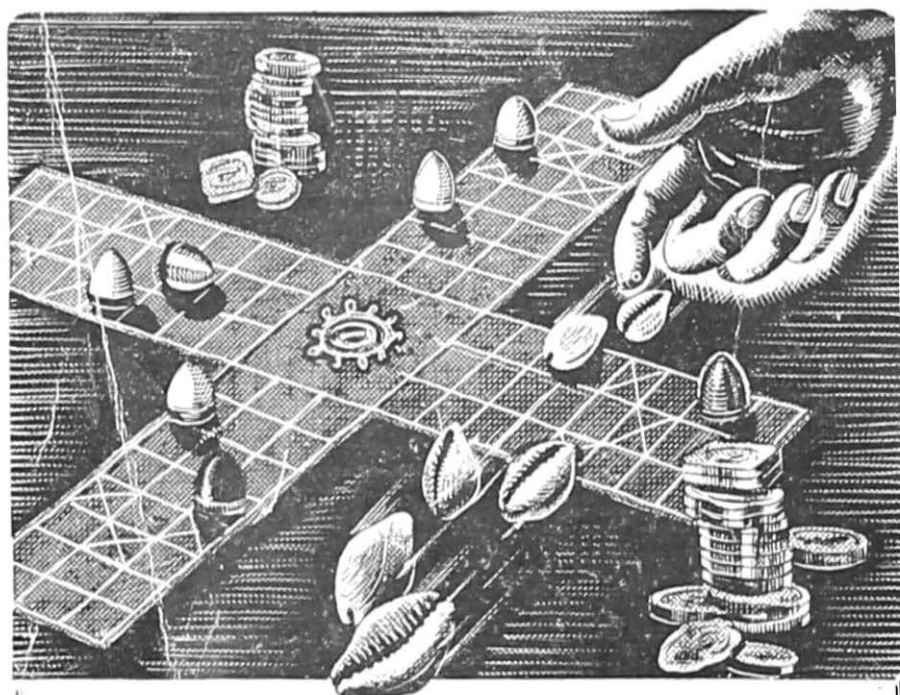
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