

How Stalin Prepares Foes for Execution

Blood Purge Interpreted by Trotzky

By CLIFFORD RAYMOND

AT COYOACAN, Mexico, in the house of Diego Rivera, Mexican mural artist, Leon Trotzky is giving his account of the present Russian terror to Dr. John Dewey's commission of inquiry. This is in April. Trotzky is defending himself against the charge that he conspired with Germany and Japan to overpower the soviet republics and, with his followers in Russia, to assassinate Stalin. The extracts used here are from the recently completed transcript of the entire hearing, which has been mistakenly called a trial.

The extracts do not follow the continuity of the hearing but we take from them what seems most vivid and dramatic. Trotzky is heavily guarded by Mexican police every moment and lives in a semi-fortified Mexican home.

First we will proceed to a part of his statements which pertains to the future.

At this writing Nikolai Bukharin and Alexis K. Rykov are in the hands of Stalin's GPU. Rykov is the former president of the People's Commissars. In that position he was Lenin's right-hand man and for a time was expected to succeed him. Bukharin was editor of Izves-



(Associated Press photo.) Leon Trotzky testifying at the Coyoacan hearing.

that Rykov refuses to confess and that is the reason why the promised trial cannot materialize. Vyshinsky can accuse only people who confess.

"Do you expect that Bukharin and Rykov will also be connected with you?"

"Everything is possible. It is a witch's play, a very terrible one, but it is a combination of gunfire and what is necessary for Stalin. I only know that Bukharin was sent abroad in



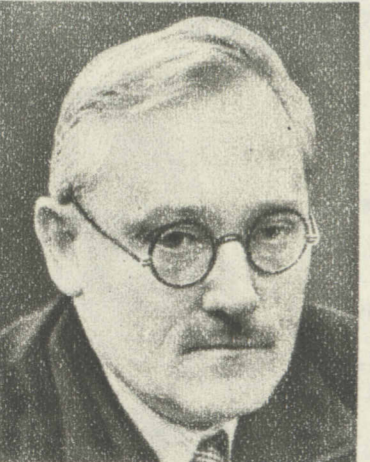
Josef Stalin (left) and his war commissar, Klementi Voroshilov, enjoy a laugh at a soviet conference. (Acme photo.)

tia, the official government newspaper. The bolsheviks were expelled from the party last March and soon afterwards arrested. Since then nothing has been heard of them. They are known to be going through the softening process by which Prosecutor Vyshinsky gets evidence for the famous trials if they are made public. Few are

the beginning of 1936 for their factories. He was their agent. He was in Prague. Now I ask myself if it was not with the purpose of preparing him. (For his trial.) He gave a lecture in Prague, totally in the official spirit, but it is possible that while he was abroad he could be the victim of frame-up. They could say he entered into communication with the Trotzkyites and the German agents. I don't know but it is quite possible.

"The same with Rakovsky [another Trotzky adherent]. When he was sent to Japan, I was a bit astonished. What was the meaning of it? It was at the end of 1934 and the British friends of the soviet union, friends in London, declared: 'You see, the repentance of Rakovsky is totally sincere. The government sent him abroad.' But his family remained in Moscow. And at that time I was of the opinion that he was sent abroad for demonstrative purposes, for the world to see. Now I ask myself if it did not have a second purpose, to frame him afterwards that he was connected with the Japanese military agents in the government, and so forth."

Both men were put by the Stalin government where place

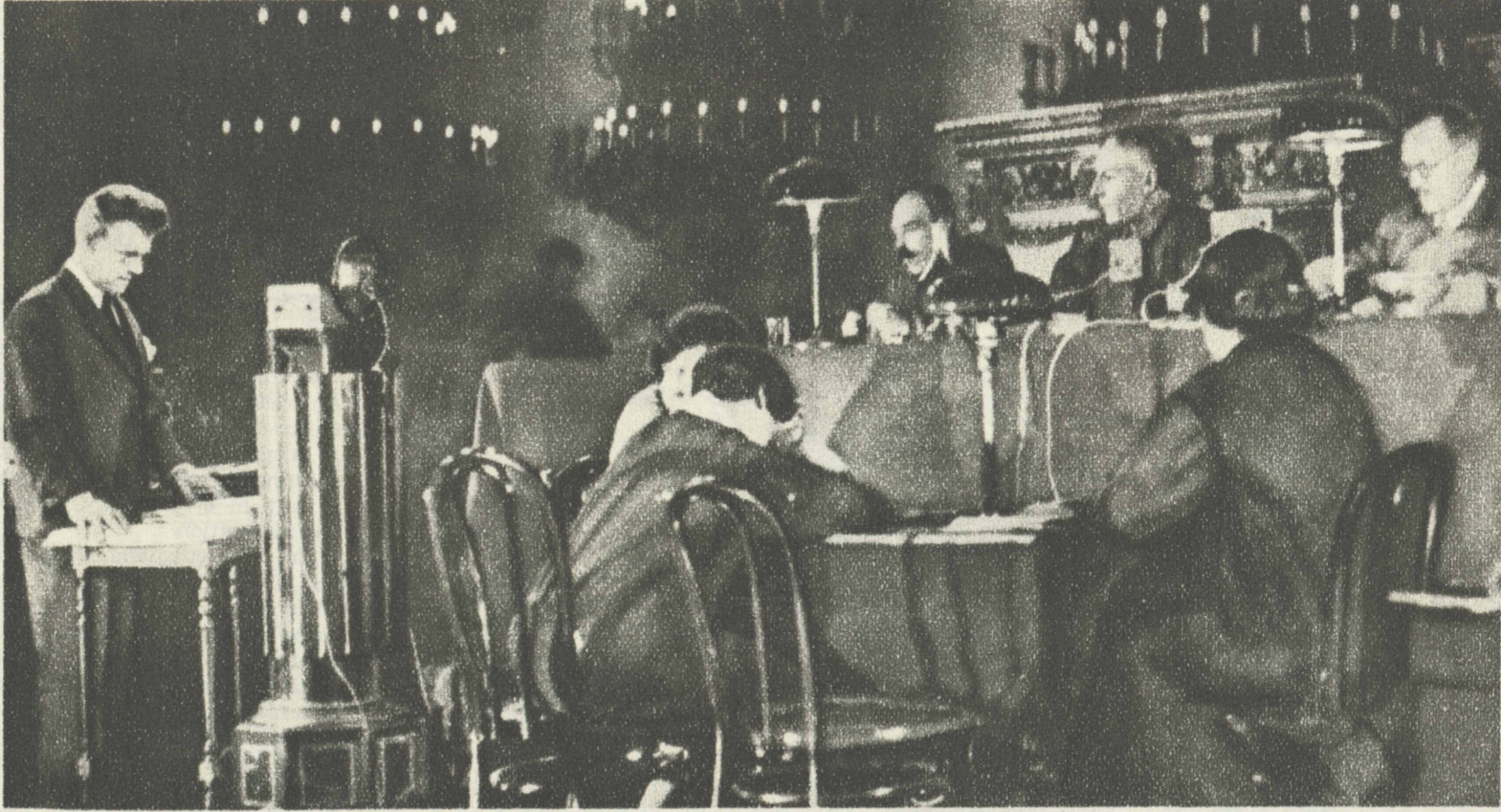


(Acme photo.) Andrei Vyshinsky, Stalin's prosecutor, who "preparates" his victims for trial.

"Bukharin," says Trotzky, "is now waiting the moment when Stalin will take his blood." Stalin still waits. Something has gone wrong with his blood purge at the moment. Of that we may presently learn any day in the world's news. You learned recently that nearly 100 Russians had been shot without public trial for alleged wrecking activities in the Siberian military areas. They were accused of being agents of Japan.

Trotzky is asked if he cares to give any opinion regarding the future of Rykov and Bukharin and the others accused, whoever they may be.

"I heard from private sources



The death sentence is imposed on a Russian engineer (left) who has been accused of plotting against the soviet government. Trotzky says that these defendants first undergo a softening process that reduces the accused to the shape of moral jellyfish. The three judges are at the right. (Acme photo.)

and time would fit in subsequent accusations.

If we are to follow the tangled threads of Trotzky's story in defense of himself we must for the moment assume with him that Stalin has a program of extermination locked up in his secret mind. Later investigators will discard this assumption and see what it is worth from the other side of the fence.

Remember for the moment that the Trotzky left wing followers, the very men who later confessed themselves to their deaths and accused Trotzky of plots with the German and Japanese governments to dismember Russia and to restore capitalism, had been expelled from the party and exiled. They lost the high spirit of rebellion and sought to make their peace with Stalin. They capitulated. That is the political term for it.

Trotzky denounced each capitulator as he surrendered for permission to return not only to Russia but to the favor of Stalin and to reemployment in the state. If we'd ask ourselves some questions we'd wonder whether this might not have been the perfect program for a conspiracy. We might say that Stalin, thinking himself safer with dead men than with exiles, encouraged them to return that he might do what he has done

The first frame-up of Trotzky's story came when Stalin, censoring opposition publications accused the Trotzkyites who had been publishing under cover, of being in alliance with the Whites.

With this beginning, says Trotzky, growing out of a frame-up of censorship and espionage, the first violence was used against his wing of the party. In 1926 the first arrests were made. But, says Trotzky, Stalin had then been too impatient. He had overstepped himself. The central committee was not prepared to support such measures of repression. The embarrassment and discomfort of the party directors was so apparent that Stalin had to adjourn the meeting.

"They went out in groups," says Trotzky, "the majority of the general committee. Stalin was too impatient in this question. It was not prepared well. He began too early. It was totally abandoned as a painter who makes a sketch that is not good. They began another and bigger sketch. It was necessary not only to educate the prosecutor, because Vyshinsky was not born as he is now, but it was necessary to educate Ulrich, the chairman of the military court. I knew him when he was a boy of ten. He was ap-



Men without hope. Russian engineers, under close guard, arrive in Moscow for trial on charges of plotting against the republic. (Acme photo.)

pointed as a military judge by me. He was an honest young man. I knew his father in Siberia. He was of German-Baltic origin but totally Russianized. When I visited his father and mother in Siberia Ulrich was a boy of ten years. He had a hole in his trousers. I remember well how he covered this hole with his hand. I had sympathy for this boy. Then he became a jurist and was recommended to me by one of my close collaborators as a good young man. He produced on me the best impression and I named him a military judge. Stalin must have educated him during the ten years to become what he is now.

"With the others it is the same. It is a system of demoralizing good people. Stalin also was not born a master of frame-ups. He was a good learner. If he could have more imagination, historical imagination for ten years, he would never begin his blocs. It is only his lack of historical imagination and the shortness of his vision, which is penetrating but

very short, for empirical things. By and by he became an instrument of the bureaucracy himself, because he follows the bureaucracy. He became demoralized himself. It is the ultimatum of the bureaucratic system." V. V. Ulrich is the president of the military collegium of the supreme court of the U. S. S. R. who has presided at all the public trials resulting in the execution of so many of the old revolutionaries.

Then came the fifteenth congress of the party and the celebration of the anniversary of the October revolution. This was in 1927. It marked the final victory of the bolsheviks over the conservative members of the old дума, the mensheviks. In the celebration there was a parade and in the parade a demonstration by the Trotzkyites. They carried placards with various slogans. One called for a fight against the kulak, another against the speculators, another against the bureaucrats, and another declared, "We shall accomplish the testament of Lenin." (Here Trotzky with reference to the kulaks and to the testament of Lenin invites the real cross-examiner. He has contradicted himself.)

Trotzky says the GPU squads seized the placards and destroyed them and arrested some of the demonstrators. In the congress Trotzky introduced a platform signed by many of the men who have testified against him since and accused him of conspiracies. All the signers were subsequently arrested and sent into exile. Trotzky himself was sent to the Chinese border.

Altogether, says Trotzky, "we estimated that there were about 11,000" thrown out of Russia as a consequence of the demonstration and the submission of the program to the congress. Before the first Zinoviev-Kamenev trial, that is in 1935-'36, Trotzky says his information is that more than 60,000 were expelled.

Trotzky is asked if he had received any information upon which he could estimate how many oppositionists were arrested for that.

"It is difficult. I quoted Victor Serge, who affirms that in his very serious and cautious appreciation that only from Lenin-



(Acme photo.) Gregory Zinoviev, once high in soviet councils, was tried many times and finally executed. The charge—plotting against Stalin.

the last time, before the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial, they banished to Siberia between 60,000 and a hundred thousand women and children, families of the people under suspicion. He had seen them on the railroad station, absolutely helpless, and in crowded trains. That was in 1935 or 1936. Cilliga affirms the same."

Victor Serge, a French radical, was in Russia at the time. Cilliga is Dr. Anton Cilliga, who was a political prisoner for five years, talked with many of the imprisoned Russians and himself escaped.

The liquidation of the bolsheviks, the self-liquidation, had begun. Kirov was assassinated in December, 1934. Trotzky says no one knew of Kirov until some young fanatics shot him. He was secretary or assistant to Stalin. It was a fatal mistake to shoot him, says Trotzky, proving that individual terrorism always plays into the hands of the dominating class. It removes only a man and enables the dominating class to strike back at every one in the opposition.

The leader of these young terrorists was Nikolaev. Trotzky is asked if he can explain the causes, the background of that terrorist act which brought the conspiracy of or against Stalin to its head.

"It is a dissatisfaction of a certain part, if I can say it, the most critical part of the youth—it is a certain historical and political impasse for youth. Every youth can develop only in the atmosphere of a certain liberty of criticism. The youth must oppose the older generation and break the way for themselves. It is almost a physiological law. When all the possibilities are hermetically closed, explosions are inevitable. But the reasons, the individual reasons for the individual Nikolaev, have remained absolutely unknown up to the present time. You cannot find in the soviet press under what conditions Nikolaev assassinated Kirov. Had he access to Kirov every day as a secretary? I don't know. Nobody tells about the concrete circumstances. Who was Nikolaev? He remains unknown. My first hypothesis is

Victims Are Softened for Trial

that it was individual revenge. Maybe certain conflicts about a woman, concerning a woman question and so on—a situation which could compromise Kirov if it would be published. It was for me only one explanation for this secrecy."

Kirov became the martyred saint of the Stalinites and the revenge has almost obliterated the old Bolos. The assassination of Kirov by a youth group opened the way for the terrible reprisals, for the new terror.

Trotzky says: "There is a certain stratum of liberal bureaucrats who in family circles criticize other bureaucrats. They refer to Stalin as 'him.' Then they go about doing their ordinary duties. But the son and daughter, they develop terrorist tendencies. The son and daughter say, 'We must kill them.' It is because they know no other means, no public means of expression. This is the reason for terrorism. It is possible also that it was a political act by Nikolaev. I don't know."

"The indictment was published on the Nikolaev trial," says Trotzky, "and in this indictment my name appeared for the first time in such a question. Nikolaev after 20 days of arrest confessed that a foreign consul in Leningrad gave him 5,000 rubles for terrorist acts."

"And what was the verdict in the trial of Nikolaev?" Trotzky is asked. "What happened to the defendants?"

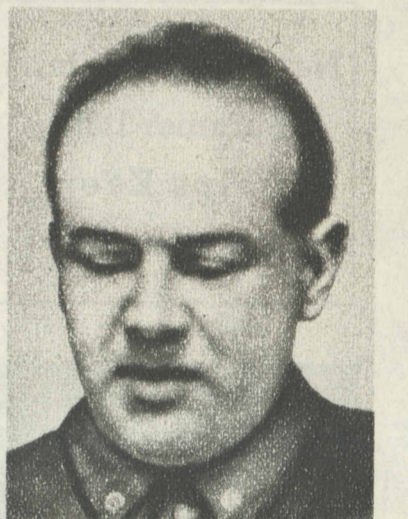
"All 14 were shot."

"Was the trial published?"

"No, the genuine Kirov trial was secret."

Nearly all these terrorist trials are secret. You read in your Tribune of June 11 that eight high soviet army officers, including the vice commissar, had gone to trial in secret. Stalin seized these men after he had seized Bukharin and Rykov, whose trial as this writing is not ready. Does this bear out Trotzky's challenge that Stalin cannot have a public trial until his prosecutor and his GPU have broken down the accused to the shape of moral jellyfish?

(This is the second of a series of articles by Mr. Raymond. Another will appear at an early date.)



(Acme photo.) Vasily V. Ulrich presides at the public trials of Stalin's foes. Trotzky remembers him as a boy.



An unusual photograph of Lenin (his head resting on the shoulder of a comrade) at the funeral of the soviet railroad commissioner. This picture was taken in the early days of the Red government. (Acme photo.)