

*Why Did They  
"Confess"?*

A STUDY OF  
THE RADEK-  
PIATAKOV  
TRIAL

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**PIONEER PUBLISHERS . . . NEW YORK**

## Introduction

THIS PAMPHLET has been translated from the March, 1937 issue of *Nouvelles d'U.R.S.S.*, an information bulletin published by the "Que Faire?" group in France. The "Que Faire?" group is a dissident Communist tendency, whose best known leader is André Ferrat, until two years ago a member of the Political Bureau of the French Communist Party. Though this group split away from the Communist Party on the basis of sharp opposition to the new policies of the Communist International, in particular to Popular Frontism and to the position on the question of war now held by the Communist International, it is nevertheless severely critical of "Trotskyism" and of the Fourth Internationalists, represented in France by the P.O.I. (*Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste*).

The analysis made in this article, it will be observed, is remarkably "non-tendencious" in character. It presupposes no agreement with, or even interest in, the political views of its author. It is a cold and sober study of the nature and methods of the Radek-Piatakov Trial, a calm evaluation of the evidential weight of the statements made therein by the defendants, the "witnesses," and the Prosecutor. The central conclusion—namely, that the confessions are false and that it is *impossible* to explain the confessions if they are accepted as true—is proved with genuinely scientific rigidity. It is entirely safe to predict that there will be no *rational* answers to the analyses and arguments of this study.

In addition, this article suggests a positive hypothesis to explain "why they confessed." It should be noticed that this hypothesis is altogether independent of the rest of the analysis. It is in no sense necessary to accept this positive explanation in order to accept the rest of the analysis. The rest stands on its own feet. For my part, I regard the hypothesis here stated as only one phase of the total explanation.

And, in general, it should be noticed that the question of the objective truth or falsity of the confessions can be answered without

any reference to the speculative *psychological* question of "why they confessed." The methods made use of in this pamphlet are sufficient to demonstrate that the confessions are *false*, and that the Trials are a frame-up whatever the psychological explanation may be of the conduct of the defendants. This point is of the very greatest significance in arriving at an estimate of the Trials.

The method of this article, with its absence of political bias, has a peculiar value in clarifying the problem of the Trials for a point of view external to the political conflicts and interests which are focused by the Trials. It shows that we are compelled to conclude that the confessions are false and the Trials a frame-up even though we do not "take sides" with reference to the political conflicts or even understand those conflicts. Nevertheless, this method of approach imposes also a limitation. The Trials present, it is true, a scientific and logical problem: the determination of the truth or falsity of the statements made in the indictment and the confessions. But they present also a political problem of the highest order, and when this is put to one side, we cannot even begin to grasp their social and historical significance.

The complacent hypocrites who signed the Open Letter attacking the movement to establish a Commission of Inquiry to hear the charges against Trotsky, "argued" that the Trials were a purely internal affair, and that Americans had no right to "interfere" in the affairs of the Soviet Union. It is hard to estimate the balance between blindness and hypocrisy expressed in such a view. No less a problem than that of the future of mankind is concentrated in the question of the Trials. They are no isolated phenomenon, nor one confined to Moscow. In the Soviet Union, through the Trials, Stalinism is physically exterminating the entire generation of Old Bolsheviks as a necessary part of its destruction of the triumphs of the October Revolution which that generation led. In this way, the Soviet Union is being left increasingly helpless before the possibilities of capitalist restoration, possibilities which will be enormously heightened with the outbreak of the coming war. In Spain, the Stalinists, using the Trials as "justification," are attempting the suppression as "agents of Franco" of all those who in the Civil War call for the socialist revolution and who do not accept the perspective of defense of democratic capitalism. In this way, even a complete loyalist victory, bought with hundreds of thousands of lives, far from making possible the emancipation of the Spanish workers and peasants, will leave them straight-jacketed in the bonds of capitalist exploitation.

In the United States, as everywhere, under the slogan of "drive the Trotskyists out of the labor movement," once again "justified" and motivated by the Trials, the Stalinists are trying to isolate from the working class all those who refuse to accept their policies of class collaboration and popular frontism.

The Radek-Piatakov Trial made far more explicit than the August Trial last Summer, the direction of this whole process. The August charges of terrorism took second place to the new and emphasized charges against Radek, Piatakov, and the others—above all, of course, against Trotsky—of sabotage and especially of conspiracy with—Germany and Japan. How clear the underlying political meaning becomes! Yes: the Trials are an integral and outstanding part of the preparations of Stalinism for the coming war. Stalinism aims to enlist the masses in France, Great Britain and the United States in the armies of their own imperialist governments, in a holy war against the attack which Stalin expects to be launched against the Soviet Union by Germany and Japan. Through the Trials, operating on a world-wide scale, Stalinism thus attempts to eliminate every possible center of resistance to this social-patriotic betrayal. Through the Trials, Stalin speaks to the world, to the masses and to the democratic governments whose alliance he strives for: for all those who are against the war, the stand for the policies of revolutionary defeatism in *all* capitalist countries, are direct agents of Fascism and the Fascist nations, and *must be exterminated like mad dogs*.

This, in brief, is the meaning of the Trials.

JAMES BURNHAM.

*April 15, 1937.*

# Why Did They “Confess”?

## 1. THE INDICTMENT

ACCORDING to the verdict rendered by the Court on January 30, 1937, the defendants in the Radek-Piatakov trial were convicted of crimes committed on the direct order of “the enemy of the people”—L. Trotsky.

The following, according to the account of Marcel Cachin\* in *l'Humanité* of February 15, 1937, are the crimes of the condemned men, crimes they themselves confessed.

“1. We plotted secretly, in agreement with Trotsky, to kill the leaders of the Soviet state. We succeeded in assassinating only one person, Kirov. We failed in the case of the others; but we had our eye on all of them, starting with Stalin.

“In fact, the corpse of the unfortunate Kirov is there to answer those who refuse to believe in their terroristic activities.

“2. In agreement with Trotsky, we took advantage of our important posts to sabotage the work of the five-year plans; we did not shrink from any crime in order to carry out our bloody work.

“And, in point of fact, the corpses of hundreds of workers, engineers and Red soldiers prove that these miserable curs went through with their criminal program.

“3. We were determined to go even further. Our diabolic plan was not merely to sabotage construction but, failing to get any support from the Soviet masses in order to crush the power of the communists, we made connections with the heads of aggressor nations encircling the U.S.S.R., known enemies who are determined to make war for the purpose of destroying all the work of Lenin and Stalin.”

Terrorism, sabotage, and diversion, high treason and espionage—this is how the court characterizes the acts committed by the defendants.

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\*Cachin and Vaillant-Couturier (mentioned later on), leaders of the French Communist Party, were present at the Radek-Piatakov trial. The quotations cited from their articles written after their return to France were reproduced in this country in the Communist press, and are similar in content to the standard “official” estimate. [Tr.]

If a trial has any purpose, it is that of proving whether the indictment brought by the public prosecutor, after preliminary examination, conforms to reality. Let us note in passing that even if a court conforms strictly to all the rules of juridical procedure, even if the selection of judges removes any suspicion of their partiality, judicial errors are not excluded. But with the check of a proper defense and public opinion, their probability is lessened.

To admit, *a priori*, that a verdict is just, *because* it was handed down by a Soviet court, *because* the prisoners are political enemies, to admit this even before the verdict is rendered—as does the official communist press—is to admit the infallibility of Soviet justice, an admission the Soviet press itself will not substantiate, since it has often criticized Soviet justice in the past for its weaknesses and shortcomings.

If this attitude is adopted, any discussion is useless. We wonder then what is the purpose of a *public* trial. Nikolayev, assassin of Kirov, and the sixteen convicted with him, were executed in December, 1934 following a *secret* trial, as were a hundred others whose crimes are not even known. As for the leaders of the C.P., and those who follow them blindly, the fact that the executions were ordered by the *Soviet State* suffices to prove the guilt of the victims. For them public trials are a needless luxury.

Public trials in the U.S.S.R. aim to convince those for whom the word of Stalin is not the supreme criterion of truth. Therefore we have no right either to treat the sentence of the court as gospel, or to call those persons “fascists” who, before making up their minds, examine the record of the trial, and after such an examination, do not share the views of the court.

## 2. THE PROOFS

“Everyone, with the exception of the fascists and the Trotskyists,” writes Cachin in *l'Humanité* of February 14, 1937, “admits the materiality of the facts confessed by the accused.”

Let us look at these facts, according to Cachin's own account:

1. *The corpse of Kirov.* Yes, this is a material fact. But Kirov was assassinated by Nikolayev. To avenge this death, there were, besides Nikolayev, scores of known executions (sixteen convicted with him, a hundred in December, 1934, sixteen in August, 1936). We have no right to make use of this corpse to declare men terrorists against whom no *trace* of evidence exists to prove that even in thought did they participate in the assassination of Kirov.

That Kirov is dead is a fact. It is also a fact that thirteen accused in the Piatakov trial were executed. But no man capable of reflection has found the slightest *proof* that the defendants in the Radek-Piatakov trial were implicated in Nikolayev's crime.

2. There are hundreds of corpses of workers, engineers and Red soldiers, victims of disasters and accidents—of that there is no doubt. But to write that “no one would venture to doubt that the seventeen Trotskyists on trial were assassins, that these corpses *prove* that these miserable curs went through with their criminal program,” is to substitute wishful thinking for reality.

If tomorrow Hitler displays the corpses of a number of Nazis and declares: here is the *proof* that they were assassinated by Thälmann; if the day after tomorrow, Vargas displays the corpses of several Brazilian fascists and declares: here is the *proof* of the terrorism of Carlos Prestes, every honest worker will say: “Stop there! This is an infamous deception. On one side, we see corpses, on the other prisoners. It is up to you, prosecutor, to furnish the proof—not of the *existence* of assassinated men but of the *guilt* of the accused.” In other words, when we speak of *proofs*, we mean material, circumstantial evidence, documents, finger prints, trustworthy and reliable testimony, etc., etc. . . . the *totality* of which will show how the crime, of which the indicted are accused, was perpetrated. (For the time being, we leave aside the confessions.)

Does Cachin produce evidence of this kind to establish that it was acts of sabotage and diversion which caused the death of scores of workers? No. Nor was anything of the sort presented at the trials.

3. Cachin and Vaillant-Couturier stress furthermore a third type of proof: they were present at the trial and heard the confessions. Their testimony on this point does prove one thing: the trial was held; the prisoners were there and confessed. But no one doubts this, and no one ever did doubt it. The testimony of Cachin and Vaillant-Couturier does not, and cannot, prove anything more, and it is worthless in establishing the *guilt* of the defendants. Except for emotions and subjective impressions, the reader of the court record *knows* as much about the trial as do the journalists and politicians who were there as spectators.

But a perusal of the court record (*Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre*, published by the People's Commissariat of Justice of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, 1937) shows that no material proof exists.

Only two proofs are even cited:

a) Regarding Kniazev, head of the Southern Railways, the indictment reads:

"The accused Kniazev's treasonable communication with the Japanese intelligence service has been established, not only by Kniazev's own testimony, but also by his correspondence with Mr. H., found in his possession together with photographs, letters from Mr. H., one marked 12/15 and another of 8/23/36)."\*

It is impossible to express an opinion on these proofs because they were scarcely mentioned at the public sessions of the court. In any case, Kniazev is a defendant of second rank, and there was nothing to prove that he carried out the alleged work of espionage on the order of the principal defendants, or of Trotsky.

b) One other material proof consisted of a notebook found on Stroilov, chief engineer of Kemerovo, candidate to the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet, sentenced to eight years in prison.

Following is the proof, summarized from the official *Report of Court Proceedings* (pages 270-279) :

"At the request of the public prosecutor, a notebook containing the telephone number of von Berg in Moscow, at the time of his last residence in the Soviet Union, was shown to the defendant, Stroilov. Stroilov admitted that this notebook belonged to him and that he himself noted down the telephone number.

"Vishinsky asked the court to add to this record the affidavit made by the Hotel Savoy, proving that Berg, merchant under German jurisdiction, resided in said hotel from September 1st to the 15th. The telephone number recorded in Stroilov's notebook coincided with the one of von Berg's room.

"At the request of Vishinsky, Stroilov was shown the photographs of twenty foreigners. Stroilov identified the photos of Wüster, Berg, Flessa and Schebesto. The court established that the photos identified by Stroilov coincided with those contained in the files at the Foreign Department. The defendant, Shestov, pointed out, among the documents presented to him, the photos of Flessa and Schebesto. The court established that the photos pointed out by Shestov also coincided with those in the files in question."

All this merely proves one thing: Stroilov knew the four German engineers who worked in Moscow (Wüster, Berg, Flessa and Schebesto); Shestov, who was executed, knew the last two. Further, Stroilov knew Berg's telephone number at the time of his residence in Moscow, as well as his Berlin telephone number.

Now, according to the official account, Stroilov and Shestov lived a long time in Berlin, engaged in work for Soviet economic agencies. In the U.S.S.R. their work put them in touch with German engineers. Hence, the facts revealed to the court prove absolutely nothing as to

\**Report of Court Proceedings*, p. 14.

the guilt of the four German engineers, nor as to the guilt of Stroilov and Shestov. The fact of knowing German engineers, having relations with them, copying their telephone numbers—does this *prove* that one is a spy or that one entered into these relations for purposes of espionage?

Even granting that Stroilov and Shestov were agents of the German intelligence service, that does not yet prove that the other accused, and especially Trotsky, knew or approved of this activity, or that they can be held in the least responsible for it. With much more reason, one could deduce that Ordjonikidze, People's Commissar of Heavy Industry, *direct* superior of Stroilov and Shestov, and Stalin, master of the U.S.S.R., are responsible for the main crimes of these two defendants, because the connection between Stroilov, Shestov and Ordjonikidze-Stalin is beyond a doubt. Accepting the line of reasoning followed by Vishinsky and Cachin, this is where we would be led.

At the very most, material evidence exists in the cases of *three* out of seventeen defendants. As for the others, they speak of numerous letters from Trotsky which they quote from memory, all *destroyed*. We know of their existence only from the confessions of the accused. Hence, in the final analysis, everything is based on the confessions. If there had been no confessions, there would be no foundation under the trial; the whole structure of the indictment would crumble.

When in his speech at the Vélodrome d'Hiver, February 14, 1937, Cachin said: "All the prisoners admitted, since the documents and proofs were there before them, their link, through espionage and bribery, with the agents of Hitler and Japan," we are face to face with an obvious falsehood. None of these documents or material proofs were produced at the trial.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF THE CONFESSIONS

Thus, inquiry into the trial reduces itself to a critical examination of the depositions of the accused and witnesses (the witnesses summoned to the stand were *all* accused of the same crimes as the defendants, they were all arrested; they ought to have been in the prisoners' dock with the same status as the seventeen prisoners).

We leave aside what is self-evident from a first reading of the proceedings of the trial: the implausibility of the confessions. For example, to carry out the railway accidents (Lifshitz, a defendant, told of 3,500 accidents organized by himself), the heads of the Commissariat of Railways present in the dock, who did not work directly

on trains or in stations, would have needed at their disposal a vast conspiratorial organization numbering *thousands of operatives*. Such an organization would have had to carry on for years without being found out. If this were the case, we might well ask what the Soviet police and the Commissariat of the Interior\* are worth.

We leave aside this criticism because the *implausible* is not the *impossible*. The opposite hypothesis: the confessions are false, the trial is a frame-up, is at first glance as little plausible as the first hypothesis. It is so monstrous that we have an inclination to reject it a priori.

But we must choose between the two: either we have to believe the accused, in spite of the implausibility of their stories, or, on the other hand, they do not deserve credence, the confessions are false, and the trial is therefore a frame-up. An examination of the *concrete facts* at our disposal is the only way to arrive at a valid judgment.

Did the accused tell the truth? When we say the accused, we have in mind those who were tried publicly, the seventeen, whose accounts are part of the same story and form chapters of a major work—the indictment.

But there were other prisoners. What did they say? About this, nothing is known because the defendants were *selected*. We wrote on this subject in No. 5 of the *Drapeau Rouge*, February 5, 1937:

“The present trial was held following two trials of Zinoviev, Kamenev and their friends: one on January 15, 1935, and another on August 23, 1936. The indictments in these two trials declared that the cases of a certain number of defendants ‘were held up because they were still under investigation.’ At the time of the trial in August, 1936, the names of twelve accused were mentioned as ‘held in reserve.’ Not one of them figured in the present trial. Why? Let us remember that among them was Gavin, who was alleged to have acted as intermediary between Trotsky and the defendants: the terrorists Schmidt, Esterman, etc. . . .

“From the very opening of the trial, defendants mentioned dozens of new ‘accomplices’ in whom no one seemed to take the least interest. For example, Piatakov alone mentioned eighteen names of ‘accomplices.’ Whole groups of criminals were mentioned, but they were absent from the prisoners’ dock, just like the twelve ‘held in reserve,’ just like the hundreds of other ‘Trotskyists’ arrested in 1935 and 1936.

“Either the investigation which disclosed the Trotskyist plot is finished—and in that case *all* the participants ought to figure in the trial—or, on the other hand, the investigation is not finished. And in

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\*The functioning of the G.P.U. is now carried on through the Commissariat of the Interior. [Tr.]

that case, what right had they to select seventeen individuals in such arbitrary fashion?

"The fact that seventeen prisoners were chosen from a much longer list can be demonstrated by a simple device, already used by Sedov for the Zinoviev trial (see *Livre Rouge sur le procès de Moscou*, page 53).

"The dossier of every prisoner is numbered. These numbers follow one another consecutively. If we arrange the ten defendants whose depositions figure in the indictment in the order of the numbers on their dossiers, we get the following table:

Piatakov	1	Drobnis	13	Hrasche	21
Radek	5	Shestov	15	Turok	23
Sokolnikov	8	Pushin	19	Kniazev	32
		Arnold	36		

"So that for seventeen defendants there were at least 36 dossiers. Where are the nineteen of the other dossiers?

"How much importance should we assign to this selection? An enormous importance. If we see in the prisoners' dock only those who confessed, we have a right to infer that those who *refused* to confess will never be brought to a public trial. Therefore suspicion inevitably hovers over those who were considered 'worthy' of participation in a public trial."

This suspicion can only be augmented by an analysis of the *sincerity* of the defendants. Just imagine that someone makes an accusation against you. If the accuser is known as a liar, a professional slanderer, a person leading a double life, his accusation is worthless; his testimony is rejected in advance. We have no right to lend the least credence to his statements. Before believing the confessions, we must see if those who confess are worthy of trust.

For years the principal defendants swore that they had broken definitely with Trotsky and the Opposition, and swore loyalty to Stalin. On August 21, 1936, Radek and Piatakov published blood-thirsty articles in the Soviet press against Zinoviev, Kamenev and their colleagues, and against Trotsky. Piatakov sang hymns of glory to the G.P.U. which had exposed the gang of Zinovievists.

Further, according to *Pravda* of January 25, 1937, Piatakov was alleged to have expressed orally in August a desire to intervene as accuser at the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial, and if that was found impossible, to *carry out* the sentence of the court against them.

Thus, if the contention of the prosecution were true, we would be dealing with a case of monstrous duplicity: members of the same organization shooting each other . . . in order to hide their game.

Once arrested, the accused persisted in denying any part in the

plot. Muralov held out for eight months. Radek, arrested in September, did not begin to "confess" until three months later.

Why must we believe what Radek says after December 4, 1936, and disbelieve everything he said or wrote from 1929 to December 4, 1936, during which time he denied any connection with Trotsky and the Trotskyists? The confessions of men who make systematic lying a rule of conduct cannot be accepted as a criterion of the truth.

The spuriousness of the confessions can be demonstrated more directly. In general, the confessions are so indefinite that no check-up is possible. Moreover, it is impossible, for example, to verify whether Sokolnikov had a *private* conversation with the Japanese ambassador, in order to betray the U.S.S.R., or whether Radek plotted—*privately*—with the German military attaché, etc. But in Piatakov's deposition, there happens to be a circumstantial account. He tells how, in the first half of December, he took a German plane at the Tempelhof airport in Berlin and flew to Oslo with a false passport. At Oslo, he had an interview with Trotsky.

An official check-up made in Oslo showed that not a single foreign plane arrived at the Oslo airport in December, 1935 (*le Temps*, January 30, 1937). Thus Piatakov's story is untrue on this point, as untrue as the story told by Holtzmann (also executed), at the Zinoviev trial, of meeting Sedov in Copenhagen in 1932 at the Hotel Bristol. It was proved that this hotel had not been in existence since 1917. . . .

Both Piatakov's and Holtzmann's stories are of the greatest importance in the mechanism of the trials. They have as their aim the establishment of the link between the accused and Trotsky. We have seen that on this fundamental point the statements of the accused have been invented out of whole cloth, that we are dealing here with a falsehood of classic proportions.

#### 4. A JUDICIAL FRAME-UP

If we have shown that Piatakov or Radek persisted in lying at the examination, and even at the trial, of what value are their depositions and those of their co-defendants, who admitted the most fantastic and implausible crimes without their bringing forward the slightest proof, or the court attempting even the most elementary check-up?

When we take into consideration the fact that we have a case of false confessions, the arbitrary selection of defendants becomes understandable. Those were chosen who agreed to give false testi-

mony useful to the régime; those who refused to be a part of this sinister parody were sentenced secretly.

In his summary, the prosecutor himself admitted that the accused did not tell the truth, that we must not believe them, that they are liars and cheats:

“I think that all these circumstances enable me to say that if there is any shortcoming in the present trial, it is not that the accused have said what they have done, but that, after all, the accused have not really told us all they have done, all the crimes they have committed against the Soviet State.

“But, Comrade Judges, we had an example of this in previous trials and I ask you to bear this in mind when we hear the last pleas that will be made here in a few hours’ time. I would like to remind you of how, in the case of the united Trotskyite-Zinovievite center say, certain of the accused vowed, right here, in this very dock, during their last pleas, some begging, others not begging for clemency, that they have spoken the whole truth, that they have said everything, that in their hearts no opposition whatever remained against the working class, against our people, against our country. And later, when the revolting skein of monstrous crimes committed by these people became more and more unravelled, we found that at every step these people had *lied* and *deceived* when they already had one foot in the grave.

“If we are to speak of shortcomings of the present trial, I see only one defect: I am convinced that the accused have not said half the truth which constitutes the horrible tale of the awful crimes they committed against our country, against our great motherland!”\*

Let us note in passing the “indiscretion” of the prosecutor who, by this accusation of *lying and deceiving*, destroys the value of the confessions on which the whole edifice of the indictment rests. For, *liars and deceivers* do not merit any confidence. Why must we believe that what they said was *true*, when they persisted in denying *half* of their crimes (that is to say, they *continued* to lie).

The prosecutor was forced to pose the problem of “false confessions”:

“But let us assume that the testimony of the accused cannot serve as convincing proof. In that case it is necessary to reply to certain questions as the science of criminal procedure demands. If the statements do not conform with the truth, it is what is called in science, a *denunciation*. And if it is a denunciation, *the reasons for it must be explained*. There may be different reasons for it. *The existence of*

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\**Report of Court Proceedings*, p. 514.

*these reasons must be proved.* It might be the pursuit of personal advantage, personal interest, a desire to take revenge on someone, and so forth. . . .

“The circumstances of the present case, which have been examined here with all possible care, convincingly confirm what the accused have said. There is no reason to assume that Piatakov is not a member of the center, that Radek was not present at the diplomatic receptions and did not speak with Mr. K., or with Mr. H., or with any other gentleman—whatever his name may be; that he and Bukharin did not treat certain persons who came to visit him unofficially to ‘fried eggs and sausage,’ that Sokolnikov did not speak to some representative or other, thus ‘putting a visa on Trotsky’s mandate.’ *All that they said about their activities has been verified by the evidence of the experts, by the preliminary interrogation, by confessions and testimony, and none of this can be subject to any doubt whatever.*”\*

The declaration of the prosecutor that “we have (besides the confessions) *a number of documents*” and that “all that they said about their activities has been *verified by the evidence of the experts and by the preliminary interrogation*” is a vain boast, in contradiction with the facts.

The documents? We know that *there were none*. The report of experts? We wonder how “experts” can prove the meetings of the accused with Trotsky or with German diplomats. As for industrial accidents, expert opinion might, under certain circumstances, show that these were brought about *maliciously*. But how can the report of experts prove that the *order* for this malicious act emanated from one of the accused, from a leader who was often thousands of miles away from the wreck?

Finally, the preliminary examinations. If the accusations were true, we would have to conclude that the police and the soviet judiciary are unqualified and incapable of establishing anything whatever except by “confessions.”

Let us recall: Zinoviev, Kamenev and their friends were arrested in December, 1934. The first interrogation established no legal responsibility. The *second* interrogation proved their *moral* responsibility in the assassination of Kirov. A *third* interrogation was necessary, in the summer of 1936, to prove their *direct* responsibility; but they still did not disclose their program nor their acts of sabotage, nor their connection with Radek, Piatakov, etc. Zinoviev and Kam-

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\**Ibid.*, pp. 513-514.

enev had to denounce these latter during the August trial before they were involved.

The accused at the August trial likewise denounced Bukharin and Rykov. An inquiry opened. It ended September 10th, with no grounds for indictment. A week before the Radek trial, Bukharin was still editor-in-chief of *Izvestia*. Today his guilt is *affirmed* by the authorities. What *new* facts were introduced after September 10th which were unknown (why?) to the first inquiry? What does this alleged interrogation consist of? If we are to judge by the past, it must consist merely of the *recording* of the depositions of the accused.

We return therefore to the point of departure: the confessions. There is nothing else; they are the alpha and the omega of the trials.

Let us follow the reasoning of the prosecutor with reference to them: we see no motive why the accused should have lied; *therefore* they told the truth. There is no reason to imagine that Piatakov was not a member of the center, etc. . . . ; *therefore* he is a member of the center.

This is a model of sophistic reasoning, impermissible to anyone seeking the truth. There is a very easy rebuttal. We see no motive why the accused should have told the truth; *therefore* they lied. There is no reason to imagine that Trotsky was engaged in espionage, sabotage, etc. . . . ; *therefore* the charge is false.

It is up to the accusers to bring forward the *proofs*, and not logical or psychological pseudo-analyses built out of a vacuum, analyses whose *demonstrative* value is zero. Even if the statements of the accused were more plausible than is the case; even if there had not been the arbitrary selection, nor Piatakov's imaginary journey to Oslo, a court composed of men *independent of the executive power*, letting themselves be guided only by common sense, would have had to acquit the accused for *lack of evidence*.

As to the Piatakov episode, which shows the falseness of one of the principal supports of the indictment (the link of Piatakov with Trotsky), the acquittal would have to be followed by a charge against Piatakov for perjury, and above all by the immediate removal from office of these singular judges who did not even trouble to *verify* this fantastic story.

Conviction of the accused on the sole basis of their stories, *in which we have no right to believe*, constitutes a juridical monstrosity, one of the greatest judicial scandals of history. The rôle of interrogations and of court sessions is to *prove* the guilt of the accused.

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It is only in *doubtful* cases that a decision should be left completely to the bench. Here, there were no doubtful cases. Seldom has the inconsistency of an indictment been so flagrant and brought out so clearly in the hearings themselves.

The stage managers did not bother to compose a coherent piece when constructing the history of the discovery of the plot. And to know how the authorities were led to unearth the plot is of capital importance in any trial of this type. We are confronted with a dilemma: Either the police made use of agents provocateurs, members of a terrorist organization—and if so, why did they do nothing to prevent the accidents, the attempts at assassination, espionage, etc., catching the accused *red-handed* in transmission of orders, the illegal purchase of arms, etc. (which would have constituted a genuine proof)? Or, on the other hand, the police discovered the existence of the plot *in some other manner*. In that case, perhaps they wished to protect the informers, but then, they would have to *explain* how they themselves became convinced of the truth of the information. Did they do so by arresting all those informed against, and waiting until they confessed? What guarantees do we have, in such a case, even if the accused were not subjected to physical torture, that after “a prison cure” their stories would be true?

Let us place ourselves on the same ground chosen by the prosecutor. Let us suppose that there is no real motive for the defendants *accusing themselves* of the worst of crimes. The *key to the trial* is nevertheless the statements of the co-defendants, the accusations brought against Trotsky. But far from confessing, Trotsky categorically denies everything.

Why then believe the stories of the accused—“these deceivers and liars” (Vishinsky *dixit!*)—so far as they concern Trotsky? With reference to him, a plausible motive does exist for a false accusation, namely the *desire to be revenged on someone*. No one doubts that at the moment when they accused Trotsky, the accused were inspired by a feeling of hatred for him. That part of the depositions concerning Trotsky constitutes a classic example of “informing against an accomplice,” and the court would have had, in any case, to consider Trotsky as not implicated—if it had acted like a *court* and not like a mere executor of orders received from above.

One can examine the trial from the most diverse aspects; the conclusion is always the same: we are confronted with a frame-up covering the political manœuvre of “purging” a part of the old cadres of the Bolshevik party.

## 5. FALSE THEORIES

For all that, one disturbing fact remains: why did the accused confess? How do you explain this phenomenon?

Let us note, contrary to what the prosecutor says, that it is *impossible* to explain the confessions if we accept them as true.

The first theory, upheld by *l'Oeuvre* and *le Merle Blanc*, etc. in France, is as follows: they confessed because it is true. Nothing could be simpler. But then we must suppose that the defendants are motivated by an inordinate love of the truth, ready to offer their lives on its altar. Does not their entire past contradict this supposition? If we place the articles which Piatakov and Radek wrote on September 21, 1936 (in which they denied any collaboration with Trotsky after 1928-29) alongside their depositions at the trial, is not this theory destroyed?

Besides, in his last plea, Radek declared—and he is in agreement here with the public indictment—that he did not make his full confession “from love of the truth in general.”

Then comes the official thesis expressed most completely in the article of D. Ossipov published in *Pravda* January 27, 1937, under the title: “Why do they confess?”

“The accused admit what has already been discovered by the investigating bodies of the People’s Commissariat of the Interior and the public prosecutor. The accusation is based strictly on facts. The criminal is convinced that his rôle in the counter-revolutionary organization is known. . . . The accused are overwhelmed in the first place by the weight of incontestable evidence. It is mad to deny their guilt in the face of the evidence. Denial would, under these conditions, only confirm their guilt. It would place the accused, in the court, in a painful and ridiculous situation.

“ . . . But sincere acknowledgment of the facts established in the investigation does not at all signify complete and honest sincerity.

“At the first Kirov murder trial, Kamenev and Zinoviev, with ‘all sincerity,’ admitted their political and moral responsibility for the assassination, but hid the existence of a united Trotskyist-Zinovievist center directing the terror. When the examining bodies unmasked this center as well, Kamenev and Zinoviev were already in the prisoners’ dock as direct and immediate organizers of the Kirov assassination. Again, with all ‘sincerity,’ they admitted their guilt which it was already impossible to deny. But they hid the existence of the ‘parallel center’ and the clandestine organization, supposing that the agencies of the People’s Commissariat of the Interior were not yet on the criminal trail.”

This theory is in contradiction with the facts. We have seen that the confessions, far from corroborating the facts established by other means, serve as the *sole* basis for the indictment. If this theory were true, why should Radek and Sokolnikov have confessed their private conversations with foreign diplomats, Piatakov his alleged conversation with Trotsky, Radek the contents of letters from Trotsky, etc. . . ? Except for their "confessions," nothing could reveal the existence of these facts. "The overwhelming weight of the evidence" exists only in the imagination of Vishinsky and the Soviet journalists.

Vaillant-Couturier senses the weakness of these two theories; he has recourse to a third, more plausible theory:

"The accused were cowards, but they were prisoners of the conspiracy. When they were arrested, they saw the war, the abyss that they were preparing, and then the better side of their nature awakened: that is the secret of their confessions." (*L'Humanité*, February 15, 1937.)

Radek, in his last plea, refutes this thesis:

"I have admitted my guilt and I have given full testimony concerning it, not from the simple necessity of repentance—repentance may be an internal state of mind which one need not necessarily share with or reveal to anybody."\*

But let us examine in greater detail this hypothesis. Here are political men of the first rank, having behind them decades of political struggle, having participated—in the most responsible posts—in the revolution, the civil war, and the direction of the State. These men, if we believe the indictment, had been participating since 1931 in a conspiratorial counter-revolutionary plot, while all the time proclaiming their fidelity to the régime. They become aware of what they are doing—nobody casts any doubt on their great intellectual capacity. They know what awaits them—Zinoviev and Kamenev were arrested in December, 1934, Smirnov in 1933—they are the ones who direct in the Soviet press the campaign of agitation for the murder of their "accomplices." Any one of them could denounce the plot to the G.P.U. if he thought it useful. They do not do so, for they are "enemies of the people."

They are then "the hardest of the hard." They are arrested, and then after three months of imprisonment Karl Radek, one of the greatest leaders of the international working class movement, suddenly "repents," from Trotskyist he becomes Stalinist, and denounces Trotsky, and his friends. Muralov, "Trotsky's closest follower, of whom I was convinced that he *would rather perish in prison* (sic!)

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\**Report of Court Proceedings*, p. 542.

than say a single word," (last plea of Radek\*) "repents" eight months after his arrest, becomes anti-Trotskyist and Stalinist. The others manifested their repentance after longer or shorter stays in prison.

What was then the motive that urged them to this sudden conversion, to this 180 degree turn in their political positions—if one is to believe the indictment? What are the facts that make it possible to believe that we are faced with "sincere repentance"? Here, moreover, Vaillant-Couturier comes into contradiction with the prosecutor, who remains skeptical regarding "the awakening of their better nature."

To explain the Trotskyism "of the enemies of the people," the prosecutor makes long excursions into history; the accused, if one takes seriously his historical recollections, were never revolutionists; they were always enemies of the proletariat. Thus, their crimes of 1931-1935 flowed from their past, were prepared by their past.

But "their conversion" in prison has no antecedent; it falls from heaven like a thunder-bolt. Is it due to the miraculous virtues of Soviet prison air? To the methods of the examination? To torture?

Confessions obtained by torture are null and void. That is the A.B.C. of the science of criminal procedure. The accused declare that they have not been subjected to any torture; nothing permits us to affirm the contrary. On the one hand, it is improbable that torture could break men of the temper of Piatakov, Radek, Muralov, etc. . . . On the other hand, if the accused had remained Trotskyists in the bottom of their hearts, they would have denounced such methods at the trials.

The thesis of "conversion" presupposes a premise that most of the accused bring forward: already, before our arrests, they say, we had doubts as to the correctness of the road chosen, but "we were prisoners of the conspiracy." Now these doubts could not arise *suddenly* a few months before the arrests. With people of this temper, doubts could be only the expression of an internal conflict, of a political duality, of the *heterogeneity* of their political attitudes, of the coexistence in their minds for years "of the good and the bad."

This conception, which brings us closer to the truth, deals a *mortal* blow to the thesis of the indictment. For the crimes imputed to the accused, the monstrous duplicity which they would prove, require such a tension of the nerves, such an attachment to their ideas, such fanaticism that they exclude any attitude of doubt, any hesitation. We are acquainted in history with political fighters who, to destroy an enemy, penetrate his camp, don his uniform, occupy exalted posts;

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\**Ibid.*, p. 551.

we know how these people comport themselves once they are unmasked. These people have one common trait: great firmness of character, an unshakeable faith in their cause. These people can be killed, but it is impossible to transform them into puppets, repeating the litany at the trial after the prosecuting attorney. Proofs more powerful are needed to make us believe that first-class conspirators, who have actually succeeded in keeping the country under their power for years, while instigating at pleasure catastrophes, wrecks, and attempts at assassination, were broken after a few days, a few weeks, or a few months of imprisonment.

## 6. WHY DID THEY CONFESS?

No, for a long time the accused had been neither Trotskyists nor conspirators. Their real history, excluding mystery stories in the style of Vishinsky, is sufficient for us to understand why they could fall so low as to make false depositions at the trial.

Former Oppositionists, adversaries of Stalin from 1923 to 1927, they capitulated and renounced the struggle against him between the end of 1927 and 1929. Why? They explain it clearly in the declarations they made at the very beginning of their capitulation—on December, 1927—declarations made freely and not after a sojourn in prison. At that moment the question of expelling the Opposition was being posed at the Fifteenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party. (Trotsky and Zinoviev had already been expelled.) Kamenev, spokesman of the Opposition, shows in his speech the impasse reached by the Opposition:

“We have to choose between two roads. One of these roads is that of a second party. That road, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, is fatal for the revolution. It is the road of political degeneration and class deviation. This road is closed to us, forbidden by the whole system of our ideas, by all the teachings of Lenin on the dictatorship of the proletariat. We do not wish to take this road and we do not wish to lead onto it the comrades of our tendency.

“There remains, consequently, the second road. This road means . . . that we submit completely to the party. We choose that road, for we are profoundly convinced of the fact that a correct Leninist policy can be realised only inside our party, and not outside the party and against it. . . . But if in addition we have to renounce our point of view (which is what the Congress demands), that would not be, in our opinion, Bolshevik. This demand for the renunciation of one's own opinions has never been posed in our party. If a renunciation on our part of the opinions which we defended only a week or two

ago should be brought about, it would be hypocrisy, and we would not have your confidence. If I came to tell you here: I renounce what I published in my theses a fortnight ago—you would not believe it; it would be pure hypocrisy on my part. Now such hypocrisy is not fitting here; it would merely introduce decay into the very foundations of the reconciliation (of the Opposition with the party). . . . To demand of us the renunciation of our opinions is inadmissible and impossible to execute.” (15<sup>e</sup> Congrès du C.P.U.S.S.R., Bureau d’Editions, pp. 117-120.)

Kamenev here demonstrates in advance the absurdity of “conversion,” of changing ideas at the order of the party. The Congress was not convinced by Kamenev, and on December 19, 1927, ordered the expulsion of the active members of the Opposition, demanding of them “complete ideological disarmament, the firm condemnation of the opinions of the Opposition as being anti-Leninist and Menshevist.”

The next day, twenty-three Zinovievists, Zinoviev and Kamenev at their head, handed the Præsidium of the Congress a statement that throws a harsh light on this singular, unique mechanism of self-critical declarations and the confession of uncommitted crimes.

“Neither outside the C.P.U.S.S.R. nor by organizing a second party, can we serve the cause that we served under the leadership of Lenin for years and decades. We can serve it only in the ranks of the C.P.U.S.S.R. Now the Congress has expelled us from the C.P.U.S.S.R. Consequently, harsh as may be for us the demands of the Congress, whatever conviction we may have brought to defend our ideas *before* the Congress, we are obliged to *submit our will and our ideas to the will and the ideas of the party*, for it is the sole leader of the proletarian revolution and *the sole supreme judge of what is of use or of harm to the victorious progress of the revolution.*”

The twenty-three, “disarmed ideologically,” proclaimed as false and condemned, “in conformity with the resolution of the Congress,” all the ideas that they defended on the very eve of the Congress and in the Congress itself. They ended by asking the Congress to readmit them into the party.

This document, compared with the speech of Kamenev, indicates the road that the “capitulators” were entering, the road that led them to the prisoners’ dock and before the firing squad. They forewarned the Congress that they could not in their hearts renounce their opinions but, on the demand of the Congress, they agreed to don the mask of hypocrisy to serve the party. Everything the party wishes is good, “for it is the supreme judge of what is of use or of harm to the victorious progress of the revolution.”

Compare with this statement the explanation Radek gives for his confessions:

“I must admit my guilt from motives of the general benefit that this truth must bring.”\*

Benefit of the truth. . . . But who is the judge of that benefit? The party and it alone, as the statement of 1927 explains.

The truth is what benefits the party, what benefits Stalin—what the party demands, what Stalin demands. That is the attitude adopted by the former Oppositionists who renounced independent political activity and their ideas. The confessions they made during the trials flow from the same mentality, the same attitude as their statements of 1927, as all the declarations of repentance that followed them.

In 1927, the party demanded of them, in the interest of the revolution, that they sacrifice their ideas, their program, the thing that is dearest to every revolutionist. They did so, for the orders of the party are above all else. Their attitude towards the party recalls the attitude of the believer towards his God: All that God wishes, all that God requires, is good; it must be performed, without grumbling, without discussing the will of God—in this instance, the will of Stalin.

Hence, when in 1936, the leadership of the party judged it necessary, in the alleged interest of the revolution, to deal a blow to Trotskyism and to Trotsky, when it decided to utilize for this end the former Oppositionists, the former Trotskyists, what could they oppose to the orders of the party, to the will of Stalin? After the sacrifice of their ideas, they were required to sacrifice their lives and their honor. This was needed for the defense of the U.S.S.R. Trotskyism is the principal danger, for in case of war, it might create difficulties, turn the workers away from their duty to the party, or profit by the circumstances to substitute for the government of Stalin another government. It is thus that the party leadership reasons; it demands from the “capitulators”—its hostages—this last service: participate in the execution of Trotskyism. Through their permanent capitulations of the past ten years, the former Oppositionists are all destined to play this last comedy, to forge this last link in the chain of hypocrisy that for years has constituted their lives.

There are some who, in spite of their weaknesses in the past, do not go along with the amalgam, who revolt, with a last exertion of will, on seeing the gulf to which their policies have driven them. Well, they will have time in prison for reflection, for proving whether their devotion to the party of which they talk so much will not turn

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\**Report of Court Proceedings*, p. 542.

out to be more powerful than "petty-bourgeois scruples." Those who agree to render this supreme service to the régime, *which for them continues to be the régime of the proletarian revolution*, will be the ones to appear at the public trial. They will be there under discipline, as members of the Communist party.

We are confronted, not with a trial in the proper sense of the term, but with a vast meeting, where the prosecuting attorney and the defendants deliver propaganda speeches and together make an assault on Trotsky and Trotskyism. In his last plea, Radek explains the reasons for his attitude at the trial, the goal he sets for himself (it can be applied equally to the other accused).

"I am not fighting for my honor, which I have lost. I am fighting for the recognition of the truth of the testimony I have given, the truth in the eyes not of this court, not of the Public Prosecutor and the judges, who know us stripped to the soul, but of the far wider circle of people who have known me for thirty years."\*

He specifies later the circle of which he is speaking:

"There are in the country semi-Trotskyites, quarter-Trotskyites, one-eighth Trotskyites, people who helped us, not knowing of the terrorist organization . . . we say to these elements: whoever has the slightest rift with the party, let him realize that tomorrow he may be a diversionist, tomorrow he may be a traitor, if he does not thoroughly heal that rift by complete and utter frankness to the party.

"Secondly, we must say to the Trotskyite element in France, Spain and other countries—there are such—that the experience of the Russian revolution has shown that Trotskyism is a wrecker of the labor movement. . . . And finally we must say to the whole world, to all who are struggling for peace: Trotskyism is the instrument of the war-mongers."\*\*

Would a spy, a traitor, a wrecker give such lessons? Could a poor repentant sinner speak such language? No. This language is the language of a Stalinist who, perhaps, deep within him, preserves some doubts and heretical ideas; who in an intimate conversation with a friend of old days perhaps expresses his scorn of the new masters, of the new upstarts, but who is first of all a tool in the hands of Stalin, a docile and malleable tool.

Why, under such conditions, are they sentenced, are they shot? Why this monstrous trial directed against people who have not committed the crimes imputed to them? We have tried to explain the political causes of the Zinoviev trial in No. 22 of *Que faire?* (October, 1936. A. Martin: "Pourquoi le procès Zinoviev?—Le chemin de

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\**Ibid.*, pp. 543-544. \*\**Ibid.*, p. 550.

la révolution russe.”) \* The Piatakov-Radek trial constitutes the second act of the same drama; it is the logical sequel to the Zinoviev trial.

Given the present tension of social relations in the U.S.S.R., as well as that between the U.S.S.R. and the fascist Holy Alliance, there is no room in the Stalinist U.S.S.R. for people who are not in hundred percent agreement with the régime. The former Oppositionists, in spite of all their capitulations, remain suspect in the eyes of the new masters of the State handpicked by Stalin, who are strangers to all the traditions of the revolution. In their hearts, the former Oppositionists cannot help hating, cannot help despising those who have reduced them to their lamentable puppet existence. If the situation became really dangerous for the clique today holding the reins of power, who knows but what the Old Bolsheviks might become the center of crystallization for the discontented workers; but what they might become that substitute team whose specter haunts the profiteers of the revolution?

They must be done away with. The methods by which the Old Guard is liquidated are worthy of a Torquemada or a Hitler. The Russian revolution must be very sick for its present masters to seek their inspiration and their models in the dregs of humanity.

#### 7. WHO ARE “THE ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE”?

Under this title, the *Courrier Socialiste* (No. 3, February 11, 1937) published the following note:

“One trial follows another. The circle of ‘spies,’ ‘diversionists,’ ‘terrorists,’ ‘traitors,’ is constantly enlarged. Their crimes have their roots, it is claimed, in the distant past. Ten to twenty years ago, these people are supposed to have taken the road of betrayal—at the very beginning of the revolution.

“Who are these ‘enemies of the people’?

“The Sixth Congress of the Bolshevik party took place in July and August, 1917. It named a Central Committee of twenty-one members. Seven have long been dead; six of the fourteen remaining have abandoned active political life, becoming ordinary functionaries (perhaps some have died). There remain eight—seven ‘counter-revolutionists’ (Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Smilga, *Sokolnikov*, Trotsky) and Stalin.

“March, 1918, at the Seventh Congress of the Party the Central Committee had fifteen members. Six have long been dead; two have

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\* See also Max Shachtman: *Behind the Moscow Trial*. [Tr.]

ceased all political activity. There remain seven—six ‘counter-revolutionists’ (Bukharin, Zinoviev, Smilga, *Sokolnikov*, Trotsky, Schmidt) and Stalin.

“March, 1919, at the Eighth Congress of the party the Central Committee had nineteen members. Three are dead; three have given up all political life. There remain thirteen, of whom eleven are ‘counter-revolutionists’ (Bukharin, Beloborodov, Yevdokimov, Zinoviev, Kamenev, *Radek*, Rakovsky, *Serebriakov*, Smilga, Tomsy, Trotsky) and Stalin with Kalinin (who managed to obliterate in time his ‘counter-revolutionary’ tracks).

“March and April, 1920, at the Ninth Congress of the Party, there were again nineteen members of the Central Committee. Three are dead; two have given up all political activity. Fourteen remain—eleven ‘counter-revolutionists’ (Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Preobrazhensky, *Radek*, Rakovsky, Rykov, *Serebriakov*, I. N. Smirnov, Tomsy, Trotsky) and Stalin, Kalinin and Andreyev.

“This enumeration could be prolonged. It is not worth while. . . . I wish to add a little supplementary information:

“The Seventh Congress of the party (1918) appointed a committee to draw up the new program of the party. It was composed, in addition to Lenin, of six members: Stalin and five ‘counter-revolutionists’: Bukharin, Zinoviev, Trotsky, V. Smirnov and *Sokolnikov*.

“Finally, after the death of Lenin, the Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party (May, 1924) appointed a Central Committee of fifty-three members. The Central Committee elected a Political Bureau of seven members. Who belonged to this body? Stalin and six ‘enemies of the people’: Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Tomsy, Trotsky.

“From the founding of the Communist International (1919) until 1929, *all* the essential reports were read to the Congresses of the C.I., *all* the essential resolutions were written, by five persons: Lenin and four ‘enemies of the people’—Trotsky, Zinoviev, *Radek*, and Bukharin.”

“*Not one of these Trotskyists belongs to the Leninist Old Guard*”—*this statement by Cachin and Vaillant-Couturier in their pamphlet on the trial (page 3) is a flagrant untruth.*

## 8. A GLIMPSE AT THE MYSTERY OF THE TRIAL

*Pravda*, on February 13th and 15th, 1937, carried a story that permits a glimpse of how accusations of Trotskyism are manufactured in the U.S.S.R.

In Sverdlovsk (Ural) in January 1937, a meeting of the active party workers of the October section took place. Comrade Kravchuk, factory director, functionary of the People's Commissariat of Local Industry of the Russian Republic, was present. Kravchuk uttered the following sentence, among others: "I do not understand how Kabakov (regional secretary of the party) could have sat so long beside the traitor Golovin!" (The reference is probably to a member of the Bureau of the regional committee who had been proved a "Trotskyist.")

A harmless enough criticism. But Kabakov is regional secretary, a kind of Sverdlovsk Stalin! Under his direction, the committee of the October section, having learned of Kravchuk's "crime," expelled him from the party January 14th "*for counter-revolutionary Trotskyist slander.*" At a time when Trotskyism is identified with fascism and subject to capital punishment, this motive for expulsion is heavy with threats!

This was not all. Once the expulsion had been ordered, two telegrams were sent from Sverdlovsk to Moscow, addressed to the People's Commissar of Local Industry, Yukov. One telegram was signed by the chief of the industrial section of the regional committee of the party, Yan; the other by the regional secretary, Kabakov. The regional committee informed the People's Commissar that Kravchuk had been expelled from the party "*for counter-revolutionary acts.*" They demanded that he be *removed* immediately, by telegraph.

Yukov acted without delay. Kravchuk was relieved, *by telegraph*, of his functions; another director, nominated by the party committee, was appointed in his place. Note in passing the arbitrariness with which functionaries are named: anyone can be *removed* in twenty-four hours, without even being given a hearing, without recourse. We do not know whether Kravchuk was arrested.

A month passed. But occurrences of this nature apparently multiplied to such a point that *Pravda* believed it necessary to condemn them in its leading editorial on February 13th, and it was only then that the Kravchuk case became public. At once, engines reversed. . . . That very day, at Sverdlovsk, as soon as *Pravda* was received, the bureaus of the regional committee and the urban committee of the party *annulled* the expulsion of Kravchuk and decided to inaugurate a campaign of explanations around the editorial in *Pravda* February 13th.

Imagine now that the scene had taken place, not in Sverdlovsk but in Moscow; that the criticism of Kravchuk was directed not at a regional secretary but at a member of the Political Bureau (for example, Ordjonikidze, who sat for five years beside Piatakov) or

at the General Secretary, Stalin, who himself also sat for years on the Central Committee with the "traitors" Piatakov and Sokolnikov.

This criticism, described as "Trotskyist slander" and accompanied by a telephone call to Yezhov (head of the G.P.U.): "*We have just discovered a counter-revolutionary wrecker,*" would have brought about the expulsion of Kravchuk from the party, his demotion and, without doubt, his arrest.

*Pravda* may criticize Kabakov (his downfall was certainly decided on in Moscow long before; the campaign against him cannot otherwise be explained); but Yezhov—and especially "the genial leader" Stalin—are *above* all criticism. After a sojourn in prison, Kravchuk would certainly have "confessed" his crimes (Trotskyism, counter-revolution, sabotage—only terrorism and espionage are missing). He would have figured in a nice little trial; Cachin and Vaillant-Couturier would have been able to witness it in order to write later, in their admirable style, that "the guilt of Kravchuk was clearer than daylight." (See page 3 of their pamphlet on the Radek trial.)

There is no smoke without fire, certainly; but in the U.S.S.R. "experts" have the power of transforming, often for reasons of base vengeance (as was the case with Kravchuk), harmless criticisms, mild conversations, and signs of discontent into crimes of high treason, sabotage, terrorism.

#### 9. SOME DATA ON THE ACCUSED\*

*Piatakov, Georgi* (1890-1937): Member of the Bolshevik party from 1910. First President of the Soviet government of the Ukraine (1918). Former head of the Soviet commercial agencies in Paris, later Director of the State Bank. Assistant Commissar of Heavy Industry from 1931 until the time of his arrest. Elected to the Central Committee at the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist party in January, 1934. (Up to the present, he is the *sole* "enemy of the people" to be a member of the current Central Committee.)

*Radek, Karl* (Born in 1885): Polish. An active worker in the Polish and German working class movement. Joined the Bolshevik party in 1917. Member of the Central Committee of the party from 1919-1924, and of the Bureau of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. One of the editors of *Izvestia* from 1931. Spokesman of the Soviet government in foreign affairs. Member (with Bukharin) of the commission of twenty-five which drew up the present Soviet Constitution.

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\*This data is incomplete, being based for the most part on the official *Report of Court Proceedings* in the trial.

*Sokolnikov, Gregory* (Born in 1888): Joined the Bolshevik party in 1905, at the age of seventeen. First People's Commissar of Banks. President of the Soviet delegation to the Brest negotiations in 1918, he signed the Brest Treaty. From 1921 to 1926, he was People's Commissar of Finances. Until 1935, he was Assistant People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to London. Then—until his arrest—Assistant People's Commissar of the Forestry Industry. Elected candidate to the Central Committee at the Seventeenth Congress of the party (1934).

*Serebriakov, Leonid* (1888-1937): Of working class origin. He joined the Bolshevik party in 1905, at the age of seventeen. From 1917 to 1919, he directed the Moscow Soviet. In 1919, he was elected secretary of the Central Committee of the Party; he was replaced by Stalin in that post in 1921. At the time of his arrest, he was an important functionary in the Commissariat of Railways.

*Lifshitz, Yacob* (1896-1937): Of working class origin. From 1935 until his arrest, he was Assistant Commissar of Railways, where he "enjoyed the confidence of Stalin's comrade-in-arms, Kaganovich" (according to his last plea).

*Muralov, Nikolai* (1877-1937): An agronomist, of working class family. He belonged to workers' groups in 1899, and entered the Bolshevik party in 1905. In 1917, one of the leaders of the revolution in Moscow. First Military Commander of Red Moscow. The only defendant who did not write a declaration of repentance and who did not, before his arrest, condemn Trotsky and Trotskyism.

*Drobnis, Yacob* (1891-1937): Shoemaker by origin, he joined the revolutionary movement and the Bolshevik party in 1906, at the age of fifteen. He spent six years in Tsarist prisons, and was three times threatened with capital punishment. Assistant Director of chemical factory construction in Kemerovo.

*Boguslavsky, Mikhail* (1886-1937): Old Bolshevik. He took an active part in the civil war with the partisans,\* then in the Red Army. Director of mines in Siberia.

*Kniazev, Ivan* (1893-1937): Responsible functionary in the Railway system. Collaborator of Dzerzhinsky when the latter was People's Commissar of Railways. Twice head of the operations department of the Commissariat. He "enjoyed the *particular* confidence of the People's Commissar, Kaganovich." (Last plea.) Director of the Southern Railways.

*Turok, Joseph* (1900-1937): Joined the Bolshevik party in 1917, at the age of seventeen. He took an active part in the civil war. Director of the Ural Railways.

\*Volunteer civilian detachments. [Tr.]

*Rataichak, Stanislas* (1894-1937): Head of the Chemical Products Industry, where he "enjoyed *exceptional* confidence on the part of our People's Commissar of Heavy Industry (Ordjonikidze), on the part of the party and the government." (Last plea.)

*Shestov, Alexis* (1896-1937): Former worker, Old Bolshevik. Director of the Kuznetsk Coal Trust. For five weeks after his arrest, he refused to confess. He and Radek were the only ones of the defendants who did not ask for mercy and who even refused to plead extenuating circumstances.

*Norkin, Boris* (1895-1937): Director of chemical factory construction in Kemerovo.

*Pushin, Gavril* (1896-1937): An engineer, a high functionary in the management of the chemical industries.

*Hrasche, Ivan* (1886-1937): Teacher or professional spy. He entered the Bolshevik party in 1917. Minor functionary in the Commissariat of Public Instruction. Since 1932 translator of Czech for the Communist International. Was never a Trotskyist.

*Stroilov, Mikhail* (Born in 1899): Of peasant origin. *Non-party*. Chief engineer of the Kuznetsky Coal Trust. Candidate to the All-Russian Executive Committee. Sentenced to eight years in prison.

*Arnold, Valentin* (Born in 1894): *Non-party* adventurer, chauffeur. Sentenced to ten years in prison.

Among the hundreds of "wreckers" mentioned in the trial we cite: *Bitker*, director of the rubber industry; *Kolegayev*, director of the Ural Copper Trust; *L. Marisian*, director of the State Bank until July 15, 1936; *A. Marisian*, director of a military chemical factory, etc., etc.

## Bibliography

In order to understand the Piatakov-Radek trial, it is indispensable to study the Zinoviev trial, of which it is only the sequel. A series of brochures furnishes a searching analysis of this trial.

We recommend first *le Livre Rouge sur le procès de Moscou*, documents collected and edited by L. Sedov (Editions Populaires, 15 Passage du Bail, Paris X.) \*

*Nouvelles d'U.R.S.S.*, No. 8 (September, 1936), "Le procès Zinoviev"; No. 10 (January, 1937), containing an analysis of the Novosibirsk trial. (Que faire? 15 rue du Petit Pont, Paris.) \*

Victor Serge: *16 fusillés* (Cahiers Spartacus, No. 1, 140 Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris VI). \*

*Dossier des fusillés*, published by *les Humbles*. (229 rue de Tolbiac, Paris XIII.) \*

*De la Révolution de Lénine à la Contre-révolution de Stalin*, (Groupe international Bertrand, Boite Postale 13, Boulogne, Seine, France.) \*

*Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Centre*. (People's Commissariat of Justice of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, 1936.) \*

Friedrich Adler: *The Witchcraft Trial in Moscow*. (Pioneer Publishers, 100 Fifth Avenue, New York.)

Max Shachtman: *Behind the Moscow Trial*. (Pioneer Publishers.)

Francis Heisler: *The First Two Moscow Trials—Why?* (Socialist Party of the U.S.A., 549 Randolph Street, Chicago.)

Leon Trotsky: *I Stake My Life*. (Pioneer Publishers.)

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