Nikolai Bukharin

French Marxist Tells of Great Bolshevik Leader

By CHARLES RAPPAPORT

(*Charles Rappaport is a distinguished Marxist scholar, a veteran of the French and Russian labor movements. He recently resigned from the Communist Party of France in protest against the Moscow "trials."*

This is the third of Rappaport's series of articles dealing with events in Russia. The other two appeared in previous issues of this paper.— Editor.)

* * *

STALIN'S hatred and antagonism are easily aroused by people of character and outstanding abilities. Small wonder, then, that he persecuted Nikolai Bukharin, who possessed many gifts, vest erudition and a clean record as a revolutionist.

Interests Of Revolution Supreme

Bukharin had lost his political battle but that did not prevent him from serving the Soviet regime even under Stalin's leadership. What persuaded him to do that was the general interest of the revolution. He loyally carried out his work as chief editor of the official newspaper and as one of the leading Soviet theoreticians.

Some years ago, Bukharin was sent to Paris to purchase, as we now may reveal, the Marx-Engels archives from the German social-democrats. The first question I asked upon meeting him was: "How are you getting along with Stalin" He replied: "Fairly well."

During his stay in Paris, Bukharin delivered a lecture in French (which language he knew very well) before a large and distinguished audience. In that lecture, he tried to prove, among other things, that Soviet Russia was, apart from the restrictions necessary in the work of socialist construction, the freest country in the world. When I met him on the following day, I reminded him that, in ancient Rome, one augur could not look at another without laughing. I added: "We are both augurs! You can't possibly look at me and keep a straight face after that attempt of yours to make people believe that Russia in the freest country in the world." He looked at me but did not laugh, and I suddenly realized that he seriously believed in what he had said.

Remembering this, I am inclined to credit the report in the Soviet papers according to which Bukharin defended himself passionately against the charges that were brought against him before the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. To his mind, it must have been too revolting an idea that they wanted to punish him, an old revolutionist, for the views he had held in the past and to brand him a counter-revolutionist at that.

Stalin, the barbarian, sent him back to prison, that is, to the secret torture chamber where they teach defendants how to "confess freely."

At the trial, Bukharin showed great dignity and remarkable courage. With biting sarcasm and sparkling wit, he refuted the false and ridiculous charges raised against him and revealed to the whole world that the trials were a huge frame-up directed against the real revolutionists.

Lenin's Estimate

Bukharin was highly prized by Lenin both for his personality and his abilities as a Marxist thinker. In his political testament, it will be recalled, Lenin referred to Bukharin as "the most valuable and best theoretician of the party and quite rightly considered the favorite of the party." He had the gifts of an artist to express his thoughts in spoken or written form. In 1922, when I was in Moscow to defend the social-revolutionaries before the Executive Committee of the Communist International, he drew a picture showing me as a priest holding in his hand a Bible open at the page bearing the words: "Thou shalt not kill." That picture really was an excellent piece of work.

I helped to save those social-revolutionists from death but, alas, I could do nothing to save the life of my friend, Nikolai Bukharin. I sent to Stalin a note of protest signed by many prominent people, but it proved to be completely ineffective.

The great political writers and leaders of the Soviet Union have either been killed or else are dying a slow death in prison. Not very long ago, I met Mr. Bullitt, for several years ambassador of the United States to Moscow. He told me that almost all of the three hundred guests who had once been invited with him to an official reception in Moscow, have been executed or exiled.

The murder of Bukharin is a terrible crime against the working-class movement, a crime on Stalin's head.

---

over Czechoslovakia and the way laid open for further aggrandizement. Meanwhile, too, the four-power pact, a "security" alliance of the "democratic" with the fascist powers, something for which the British Foreign Office has been striving for years, is being brought measurably nearer realization. And, last but not least, the super-heated atmosphere of the crisis has helped speed up war preparations and stimulate a frenzy of jingoism among the people, for which every European power is duly grateful.

Of course, Czechoslovakia is left to the tender mercies of Herr Hitler. Of course, the noose of war and oppression has been tightened about the neck of the peoples of Europe. Of course, Soviet Russia stands completely isolated and exposed to imperialist attack. Of course, the stage has been set for a world slaughter more dreadful and devastating than the imagination can picture. What of it? That is exactly what imperialist diplomacy is there for!