
The Russian Events.

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Unsigned in the original, most likely authors: Jay Lovestone, Will Herberg, or Bert Wolfe.

The trial and execution of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov, and thirteen others guilty of active conspiracy to murder the leaders of the CPSU and the Soviet Government has caused a profound stir, especially in the ranks of the class conscious labor movement. We are convinced that there is no adequate reason at hand to doubt the confessions made by the accused. We can see how there can be discussion as to the manner of the confessions, their groveling character, but we do not see any reason to doubt the genuineness of the confessions.

Politically, the degeneration of Trotsky and his fading followers into an outfit dedicated to terrorism in the Soviet Union is no surprise and is entirely understandable. At the time of the assassination of Kirov, when Trotsky forces were then only implicated and not yet fully involved, we declared:

“Under the conditions that have accompanied factional struggle in the CPSU in the last decade, every party opposition, whatever its program may have been, attracted a fringe of disguised anti-party and anti-Soviet elements. In addition, it must be remembered that for two years now the Trotskyites and other elements have been openly advocating the perspective of the violent overthrow of the Stalin regime in Russia—that is, of civil war. Between advocating an armed overturn and carrying out terroristic acts there is no difference in principle, the difference is only a tactical one. The former is frequently transformed into the latter once all hope of an effective mass movement is gone. Organized terror then seems to be the only way out.”

The investigation made by the Soviet Government immediately after the Kirov assassination revealed the hand of a foreign, a bourgeois government in all the plotting against the USSR. The further revelations made on the occasion of the last trial, which was an open public trial at which the defendants had every opportunity to express themselves as fully and as freely

as they wanted, showed still more clearly and established beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Nazi government had aided and abetted some of the Trotskyist terrorist conspirators. To some people this sounds fantastic, but if one considers the present character of the Trotsky program in regard to the Soviet Union, there is nothing fantastic about it but only quite a natural and logical outcome of the entire evolution of Trotskyism. For instance, but recently Trotsky declared:

“What perspective offers itself to us? Very probably a new revolution. It will not be a social revolution, but a POLITICAL one. The bourgeoisie also had ‘great’ revolutions that were exclusively political developed on a secure property basis.... The theoretical prognostications of Marx and Lenin did not foresee the possibility of a political revolution on the basis of property nationalized by the proletariat. But that was because they did not foresee the Bonapartist degeneration of the proletarian dictatorship.”

On the basis of the above, which is a self-confessed break with Marxism-Leninism, it is quite obvious that the Trotsky terrorist center would have little qualms of conscience about cooperating with the Gestapo to dispose of Stalin and other leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Government. It is this fundamental political position, undoubtedly counterrevolutionary in nature, which affords the primary basis and paramount motivation of the conduct of Trotsky and his followers and collaborators in organizing terroristic activities inside the Soviet Union. That is why Trotsky had great difficulties in explaining his position in the whole matter during the trial. That is why he issued several contradictory statements. The Trotsky remnants were in a desperate position and were unable to offer even a lame explanation.

Even at the time of the assassination of Kirov,

Trotsky did not find it necessary to speak out clearly against individual terrorism as a method of struggle against the Party leadership in the Soviet Union. He then declared:

“The subjective motives of Nikolaev and his colleagues are immaterial to us. The road to hell is paved with the best intentions.”

What is this but in fact a justification of the assassination of Kirov? Nor does Trotsky help his case any when he declares as he did at the time of the murder of Kirov that

“individual terrorism is in substance merely a reflex of party bureaucracy” and that “the party leadership bears the responsibility for the murder. In this sense one can say with full correctness: Stalin and his regime are responsible for the murder of Kirov.”

This reasoning is in line with the game played by the Nazis in which they always blame the murdered and never the assassins.

While condemning sharply the terroristic activities and complete degeneration of the Trotskyites, we must state that we very seriously doubt the wisdom and tact of the Soviet authorities in inflicting the merited punishment of death on such personages as Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov, etc. Other and sufficiently adequate punishment could have been meted out without resorting to executions, and thus granting some recognition to the inestimable services once rendered by these erstwhile powerful figures in the ranks of the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, we do not hesitate to say that

the bureaucratic regime of Stalin in the CPSU makes it extremely difficult for healthy, constructive critical opposition forces developing in the Party ranks. In fighting for a democratization of the system of Party leadership in the CPSU and in the Comintern as a whole we do so in the very highest interest of the proletarian victory already achieved in the USSR and yet to be achieved in other countries. We champion the extension of party democracy in the CPSU as well as in other sections of the Communist International precisely because we reject categorically Trotsky’s theory of Thermidorean degeneration of the Russian revolution, precisely because we reject entirely Trotsky’s evaluation of Soviet economic policy. Our sharp criticism of the Stalin leadership and lack of inner-party democracy and of collective leadership is the best guarantee for preventing the development of even the slightest possibilities for such counterrevolutionary terrorist activities as those resorted to by Trotsky. This demand of ours is in no wise a justification of the anti-working class position and actions of those who degenerate to them but is on the contrary the best guarantee against them.

Finally, we would consider it extremely tragic and not at all in the interest of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Comintern if the Stalin leadership should, on the basis of its justifiable indictment and punishment of the Trotsky terrorists, seek to make still more impossible the development of healthy critical opposition inside the CPSU and the Comintern within the framework of Communist principles and democratic centralism.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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