DESTINY OF A REVOLUTION

THE AUTHOR

DESTINY OF A REVOLUTION

by

VICTOR SERGE

Translated from the French by

MAX SHACHTMAN

JARROLDS *Publishers* LONDON *Limited*
Paternoster House, Paternoster Row, E.C.4
(*Founded 1770*)

MCMXXXVII
1937

4913

PRINTED IN
GREAT BRITAIN,
AT THE ANCHOR
PRESS, TIPTREE,
:: ESSEX ::

CONTENTS

PART ONE

THE CONDITION OF MAN AND MIND

PART TWO

THE SYSTEM

PART THREE

THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION (1917–36)

PART ONE
The Condition of Man and Mind

I

THE CONDITION OF THE WORKERS—WAGES

AS is known, the dictatorship of the Russian proletariat, exercised by the Communist Party, makes the working class the ruling class and strives to build up a new classless society. Twenty years after the revolution, the condition of the workers varies according to the degree of professional instruction, the political quality (member of the party or the Communist Youth, right-thinker, suspect, relative or friend of a suspect or of a prominent communist), the enterprise, the region. The workers in the big plants are usually better paid for the same work than are those in the small ones. Those in the large centres are better paid than those in the remote provinces. The extreme inequality of wages bewilders the observer and makes possible various statistical camouflages, the least of which consists in recording an average wage that is really a good deal higher than the wage of the great majority.

According to a report of the late Kuibyshev to the Planning Commission, published on January 3, 1935, the average wage in Moscow was 149 roubles 30 kopecks per month.* At the same period, according to my personal information, the big majority of the workers of the Electrical Station of Moscow (*Elektrozavod*) received from 120 to 140 roubles per month. The State wage fund not having been appreciably increased since then (if the numerical increase of wage-earners is taken into account), one may accept the following (monthly) salaries as the most current

* At that time 1 rouble = approximately 2*s.* 1½*d.*; 1 kopeck = 1 farthing.

at the moment: labourers, 100 to 120 roubles; average worker, 150 to 200 roubles; skilled worker, 250 to 400 roubles; Stakhanovist, 500 roubles and over, running as high as 1500 or 2000 roubles in exceptional cases.

Women's wages are always somewhat lower, which is especially noticeable at the bottom rungs, that is, for the vast majority of women workers. Hundreds of thousands of Soviet women workers get between 70 and 90 roubles a month, a poverty wage entirely inadequate to feed the one who gets it. We are forced to conclude that the employer State regards the woman's wage in reality as a bonus wage in the family budget. The theory does, indeed, say: equal wages for equal work. But you will be told that the work is rarely equal. . . .

Wages in Leningrad and Moscow at the beginning of 1936: a scientific collaborator of a large establishment of higher study, from 300 to 400 roubles; a stenographer knowing foreign languages, about 200 roubles; a newspaper editor, 230 roubles; miscellaneous employees, 90 to 120 roubles. Many women workers in Moscow textiles (*Krasnaya-Presnya*) were getting between 100 and 120 roubles only quite recently. In the provinces, where I lived, the prevalent basis of women's wages ranged between 70 and 90 roubles. An economist got 350 roubles (unlimited working day); a book-keeper (unlimited working day and penal responsibility for the running of the enterprise) 250 to 350 roubles; a responsible functionary of the party, 250 roubles and over; a director of an enterprise or the head of an office (communist), 400 to 800 roubles; high functionaries (communists) and big specialists, from 1000 to 5000 roubles. In the capitals, renowned specialists get as high as between 5000 and 10,000 roubles per month. Writers have the same kind of income. The great official dramatists, the official painters who do the portraits of the important leaders over and over again, the poets and

novelists approved by the Central Committee, may get a million a year and more.

These data require some supplementary explanations ; the collaborator of a scientific institute gets only from 300 to 400 roubles, but he works in several institutes, which comes to 1200 roubles at the end of the month. The newspaper editor, at 250 roubles per month, collaborates on other publications, which trebles his income. The factory director, at 500 or 1500 roubles, gets himself granted premiums for the execution of plans on the occasion of festivals and anniversaries. The party functionaries and the communist leaders receive gifts of garments made of fine cloth, are lodged by the party in comfortable quarters built for that purpose, have the benefits of watering-places in the Caucasus or the Crimea free of charge or at reduced rates. But the vast majority of the workers, those who live on low wages, is left entirely to itself—that is, to its poverty.

Let us make an accounting of the levies placed upon wages : the tax, the compulsory loans (15 days of wages per year, for the lower-paid ; 1 month and more for the others), dues in the party, the trade union, the Aviation-Chemistry, the Red Aid,* etc. ; the voluntary—in reality, the imposed—subscriptions for international solidarity, for the construction of dirigibles and aeroplanes, etc. The total real reduction of wages amounts to 15 or 20 per cent. In one hospital (1935), I knew probationers who received 26 roubles per fortnight at a time when brown bread cost a rouble a kilogramme ; in addition, life insurance was imposed upon them, provided they were in good health. In the factories and shops the system of fines is rigorously practised : fines for poor work, tardiness, suspension of work, deficient discipline. This provokes scenes. You believe you are entitled to 100 roubles at the end of the month, and the management presents

* In 1935 the Government prohibited the levying of payments for more than two so-called free societies. A platonic decision, but symptomatic.

you with a list of fines of 30 roubles ! It is saddening to recall in this connection that Lenin, in Siberia, began his work as a publicist with a pamphlet which was an indictment : *On Fines.*

The official propaganda makes a big to-do of *indirect wages,* represented by social insurance, free treatment in case of illness, country vacations, old-age pensions. What is substantially left of all this are the somewhat reduced wage paid in case of illness and also the allocations for pregnancy and nursing. Doctors still often receive only a limited number of sickness tickets for distribution. Free medicaments have recently been abolished. Sojourns in the better rest homes are free only to the very well-known "activists" who get offers from the trade unions. In practice, a trip to the Crimea or the Caucasus is an entirely unrealizable dream for the worker receiving from 80 to 150 roubles per month, for it involves an outlay of about 700 roubles, in addition to which he must get a permit, which is no easy matter. The published figures fully confirm this personal observation, for only 181,000 workers visited the watering-places in 1934 (out of 24,000,000 wage-workers).

What is the purchasing power of these wages ? The purchasing power of the rouble is about equal to that of the French or Belgian franc, except for the price of brown bread, which is lower in the U.S.S.R. (It costs 1 rouble or 90 kopecks a kilogramme ; in turn, however, real white bread is beyond reach : 4 roubles 50 to 7 roubles 50 a kilogramme.) Here are some prices at the beginning of 1936 : beef, 6 to 8 roubles a kilogramme ; pork, 9 to 12 roubles ; butter, 14 to 18 roubles ; sausages, 7 to 9 roubles ; salami, 25 roubles ; ham, 18 to 20 roubles ; Gruyère cheese, 24 roubles ; herring, 6 to 10 roubles ; caviar, 32 to 40 roubles ; coffee, 40 to 50 roubles ; confectionery, 9 to 40 roubles ; tea, 60 to 100 roubles ; chocolate, 50 roubles ; alcohol, vodka 12 roubles a litre. Manufactured articles : overcoat, 100 to 500 roubles ;

leather-soled shoes, 80 to 150 roubles ; a cotton suit, 200 roubles ; a woollen suit, 600 to 1000 roubles ; dress, 70 to 100 roubles ; woollen shirt, 200 roubles. Fuel : a cubic metre of firewood, cut and transported to the home, between 40 and 50 roubles (at least 6 cubic metres are needed to heat a modest lodging through the winter). Rental of a private unfurnished room in the provinces, 40 to 58 roubles a month ; a furnished corner as a roomer, 30 roubles and over, dearer than in the large cities.

To the high prices should be added the difficulty of getting food, cloth, woollens, footwear, wood. You are often compelled to go to a neighbouring town to get a pair of shoes or a plaid from which to make an overcoat. The shortage of merchandise is cause for a rise in prices on the illicit market ; and the arrest and deportation of speculators, which took place throughout the summer of 1936 at the rate of a hundred a day in Moscow alone, according to the newspapers, remedy nothing.

The worker at 100 roubles a month, therefore, receives in 24 days of work a little more than 5 kilogrammes of butter or a 100 kilogrammes of brown bread. Since you can live on bread alone, at least for a fairly long time, he is no longer famished and rather contented with this improvement.

A French worker who lived in the U.S.S.R. for more than ten years had the ingenious idea of drawing up, for 1936, a comparative table of wages and prices in Moscow and in Paris, enabling one to calculate what working-time is necessary, by category of workers (labourer, average, skilled), for the purchase of current articles and objects of consumption. He reached the conclusion that the Soviet labourer works 172 minutes for a kilogramme of white bread, which represents 36 minutes of the time of a Parisian unemployed worker ; that the Soviet worker works 1584 minutes (the labourer) or 930 (the average worker) or 632 (the skilled worker) for the kilo-

gramme of butter that the French labourer gets in 180 minutes and the skilled worker in 114 minutes. These calculations are unassailable.*

Did they live better before the revolution? People of forty are unanimous in affirming it, in all three respects of food, clothing, and lodgings. Statistics confirm it. A worker of the textile industry who in 1912–14 received 300 kilogrammes of bread per month, a miner who received 600, today get an average of 150 (the equivalent of 150 roubles). More than once I heard mothers deploring the fact that their children have never known the good times when, during religious festivals, such nice things as pastries, preserves, and creams were made; and old women complaining of no longer even having tea to drink. . . . Most of the pensions of civil-war widows are 30 roubles a month. In 1926 the pre-War level seemed to be nearly reached; they are far from it today. In order to restore to the vast majority of Russian workers their material level of 1926 it would be necessary to double all the low wages. According to the head of the Government, Molotov, in the three or four years to come one cannot count on an increase of more than "a few dozen per cent" (let us say, 30).

A dozen years ago the labour aristocracy, getting more than 150 roubles per month, represented 5 per cent of the proletariat. Let us say, to give a generous figure, that it now reaches 10 per cent, even though the new highly mechanized enterprises need semi-skilled workers above all. *Nine-tenths of the Soviet workers thus live on low wages.*

How do they manage to live? Rent, being paid *pro rata*, absorbs only about a tenth of the budget. It is true that the quarters are usually a hole. The norm of "habitable area" allocated to the inhabitants is 8 square metres *per capita* in the large cities and less

* Ch. Yvon, *Ce qu'est devenue la Révolution russe*, published in Paris by La Révolution Prolétarienne. This little book is probably the best study yet published on the condition of the Russian workers.

in the regional centres, where the local authorities sometimes reduce it to 5 square metres. This means that workers are quartered at the rate of one family to a room ; that they sleep in the corridors, in garrets, in lofts, in cellars ; and since the houses are not fitted for such overcrowding, entire families occupy poorly ventilated rooms which other families must cross in order to come and go.

Imagine the consequences, under such crowded conditions, of the lack of linen, of furniture, of clothing ; the ignorance, the alcoholism, and the informing ; and the bitter struggles that can occur, for example, over a room whose occupant, an old woman, seems to be on the point of dying. Many workers in the large plants live still more poorly, in barracks. In the provinces and in the large suburbs, people try to raise rabbits, pigs, a cow. These animals must then be lodged in the corridors, under the windows if not in the room itself, for thievery is a social scourge. And yet the most ingenious things are thought up in this primitive destitution to create a home. I have seen touching interiors, very clean and almost prepossessing, in which poverty is clothed in a sort of whiteness. Nothing there but well-washed and mended scraps out of old chests ; the lamp glass patched up with transparent paper ; the bed sheets are taken off at night, for they are irreplaceable. . . . Most tragic is the suffering felt by poorly nourished children from the great cold spells in winter-time.

Tragic also is alcoholism. Men, women, old folk, and many adolescents—everybody drinks. On the snow or in the August dust, in the fields or in the great arteries of the capitals, it is not unusual to see men fall down dead drunk. On pay days and holidays, *a third* of the passers-by stagger along, humming and bawling, down the street. The day of Kirov's obsequies the sale of vodka was prohibited. "You understand," a communist, manager of a co-operative, said to me, "if the people got drunk today, we might hear them say too much. . . ."

The alcoholism of the Russian people derives from its indigent condition. No home, no well-being, few distractions—life is joyless. There remains alcohol, which drowns the blues and unleashes the brute liberated from conventions. Alcoholism in its turn is a cause of undernourishment and of countless scenes. In the hospitals where I stayed the personnel would settle down on the eve of the rest days, preparing themselves to treat broken jaws, fractures, and injuries of all kinds. . . . Having lived with the poor of the country, I would not dream of reproaching them for getting drunk. I know too well the immense sadness of a life without escape and without joy. Alcoholism will diminish when well-being increases.

The low wage of the great number often makes the work unusable. The shoemaker, whom an artisans' co-operative would pay 150 roubles per month, has every interest in making at home, with leather he has pilfered, some clandestine repairs which bring him an additional income and which satisfy the client more, for they are fairly properly made. He takes care not to have himself turned into one of the unemployed ; on the contrary, he does everything to remain registered as a worker. Speculation—that is, the resale of articles bought from the State, be it due to favours awarded or simply to spending a night at the door of the store—feeds millions of men. The resale of a pair of shoes brings in, in one morning, as much as eight days of work in the factory. In order to be registered as a worker, people go to the factory, but it is speculation that actually feeds them. And also theft ; whatever isn't nailed down is lifted. The party periodically launches big campaigns against theft in the industrial enterprises and in the stores. Trials are staged to set an example, and the severest sentences are pronounced. But nothing can prevent the breadseller at 110 roubles a month from wolfing a small loaf and taking away another for her child, even at the risk of two years at hard labour ; nor the

worker at 150 roubles a month from taking thread from the plant, which he will easily resell at 3 roubles a bobbin. . . . Speculation explains the dissimulated unemployment of millions of persons ; it torments and relieves the masses ; the consumer suffers from it, so long as in many cases he can count upon it alone, but, since he himself speculates, the advantages gain in the end over the disadvantages.

Pilfering a bit, reselling something, a worker's household with the nominal wage of 200 roubles (the husband 130, the wife 70), and with two children, can almost double its income if it knows how to go about it. The worker feeds on vegetables, fresh in the summer and salted in the winter, on a little meat one or two days out of five, on dairy products when they are not too dear. If he has a cow or a goat, he is almost in clover, in spite of the odour of manure that fills the house. The big problems are those of clo thing and fuel. In the provinces wood is pilfered from the parks, picket fences are stolen. One winter after another, I have seen the picket fence of a military hippodrome disappear.

It is a certainty that the sorry condition of the railway men is one of the causes of the dilapidation of the rolling stock. The lines connected with countries abroad are the only ones that are well kept up. Then come a few of the trunk lines. As soon as you leave Moscow, the trains, always crowded, become dirty ; the train conductors are poor devils whose very appearance reveals a desperate indigence. Railway men, however, supplement their income by rendering illicit services to travellers and by transporting merchandise for petty speculation.

It is often asserted that in the U.S.S.R. there is neither unemployment nor a feeling of insecurity among the workers. It is true that there is rather a shortage of labour, because it is so poorly remunerated. Anyone who has looked for work in a city of the U.S.S.R knows that, while he always ends by finding it, by the time he is hired he is so discouraged that he

is ready to accept even the worst conditions. Anyone who has travelled knows that migratory throngs fill the railway stations, manifestly people who are going neither to the factory, to the office, nor into the fields the following morning. Mass unemployment, such as ravages the capitalist countries, does not exist at the present moment ; but other forms of unemployment, which governmental statistics deliberately ignore, affect millions of workers. Insecurity, under these conditions, also assumes a different form from that in the West. You have neither reserves nor savings, you live in great want, so that a dismissal followed by a short period of unemployment (without allocations) may become a terrible experience. Then again, the work does not feed you entirely, so that a prison-like insecurity has become the most ordinary thing for everybody.*

Among the people, the couple that is burdened with a family has a hard life. The man must "work" in order to have a legal status, after which the problem is to make arrangements in order to live. . . . The crèches for children, the laundries, and other public utility establishments serve only a privileged minority. The conditions of the masses are dismally, onerously primitive.

To sum up :

Excessive inequality of wages, running as high as from 1 to 15 in the ranks of the working class. Wages of the great majority very low, appreciably lower than the average wage of the statistician and plainly insufficient for the upkeep of the worker. Average wage (higher, we repeat, than that of the great majority) assuring a standard of living lower than the pre-War

* Up to 1934 the economic life of the U.S.S.R. rested upon inflation, and it still rests on low wages. The raising of wages is a vital necessity ; so is the stabilization of the rouble, that is, financial reform. Unemployment has been eliminated only by means of a sort of inflation of the personnel consequent upon the monetary inflation. It is quite probable that the return to a stable budget calculated in real values, by obliging the enterprises to reduce their general expenses, will make them liquidate the superfluous personnel and will thus bring back unemployment, which it seems impossible to liquidate in reality save in a much more harmonious social organism of greater equalitarian tendencies.

and much lower than that of the vast majority of the workers of the West. Anticipated growth of wages much too slow. A Government, however little concerned with the genuine interests of the working class, would preoccupy itself with bringing back within the shortest possible interval the basic wages of the 1914 level, nearly attained in 1926. The bureaucratic régime prefers to accentuate the social differentiation by creating diverse privileged categories to the detriment of the disinherited masses.

In comparison with the workers, the technicians enjoy a clearly privileged position. Their salaries are rarely below 300 roubles and most often they range between 500 and 1000 roubles, a sum which they sometimes far exceed. The best qualified engineers get several thousand roubles per month. They profit by bonuses. Comfortable dwellings are built for their use. They have clubs. Scientific establishments, founded in great number, aim to provide them with the means of perfecting technique. But they are not authorized to form any associations. All their researches are under surveillance.

Their condition would appear excellent were it not for the often crushing burden of penal responsibilities that weighs them down. The management of the enterprises is in the hands of communists who merely carry out the instructions of the central organizations. Do these instructions prove to be inexecutable ? Do they have unforeseen and vexatious consequences ? Do low wages adversely affect the productivity of labour ? Has the plan been discredited ? Finally, has the engineer permitted himself to formulate objections ? Did he keep still, out of prudent complacency, on the eve of an experiment that turned out badly ? In all these cases and in many others, the technical personnel, accused of incompetence, of negligence, of bad faith, even of counter-revolutionary spirit or of conspiracy, is the object of mass punishments which always mean arrests and all too often end in executions. . . .

II

THE CONDITION OF THE WORKERS—THE WORK

LOW wages cannot continue indefinitely—they are too costly to the community. They increase the general costs of production instead of diminishing them. I know a clothing factory where the bad work reached such proportions that it had to refuse all deliveries. The workers there received from 80 to 150 roubles. No amount of agitation could stimulate them ; the penalties and the fines only served to aggravate the evil. Every worker who was any good at her job hastened to quit the factory in order to sew cotton shirts at home which, when sold on the market, brought her in a larger sum. The plan was never carried out except on paper. In the club of the enterprise, men and women workers accused of sabotage were tried for cheating. Others, caught red-handed at stealing, went to prison. Both were subject to years of suffering and the factory lost several skilled workers thereby. Women workers, leaving their work at ten o'clock in the evening, were reduced to seeking out some drunken non-commissioned officer in the streets who would get them a dinner.

From the Donietz mines to the big factories the same evils have ravaged industry. In April 1931 the big textile plants of Ivanovo-Voznessensk suddenly went on strike. All their demands were contained in this cry : "We are hungry !" Hundreds of rank-and-file communists had kept secret the preparations of the movement. The central authorities yielded on every point and threw the responsibility for the inadequate nourishment upon the shoulders of the

local authorities. The factories received foodstuffs, work was resumed without repressions, and the purge began quietly. I was assured that oppositionists (Trotskyists) were later shot, on the pretext of sabotage and treason. No word of it seeped into the Press, except abroad.

Until the stabilization of the rouble,* the industrial directors tried to compensate for low quality and the low intensity of labour by eliminating leisure time. That is what the activity of the shock brigades and the brigades of enthusiasts boiled down to. Young workers, swept along by propagandists and stimulated by bonuses and the granting of various privileges (a little more substantial meal, slight improvement of the food, moving pictures without waiting a turn), formed themselves into brigades determined to work to the very limit of their strength. These brigades competed with each other, and that was the socialist emulation. Then the custom of communist Saturdayings of the civil-war days was remembered—the day of voluntary labour devoted to the common cause. But in 1919–20 only the Saturday wage was contributed, after all, and you rested on Sunday. In 1931–35 the men and women workers were called upon, under various pretexts, to do unpaid work for three rest days out of four. "Voluntary" days were arranged—by a decision of the trade union, adopted in open meeting by raised hands—in order to fill up "the breaches in the plan", "to catch up with and outstrip" another enterprise, to repair mistakes, to support the Army, aviation, schools. . . . In the last 75 days of the construction of the Moscow subway 500,000 workers contributed voluntary and free days of labour (according to the Soviet Press). It is to be noted also that in the same period, still according to the official papers, criminality

* See Part III, Chapter VI, "A Turn : The Stabilization of the Rouble". Bread-cards were abolished on January 1, 1935, and from that day on the rouble had the real value of one kilogramme of rye bread.

was proportionately increased among the subway constructors.

The stabilization of the rouble made possible the return to the methods of labour-exploitation established in the capitalist countries : piecework wages, minute-rationalization, job-timing, work by shifts. Enterprises equipped according to the last word in technique had a labour yield lower than that of the old "joints" in the vicinity of Paris or London, in which, to be sure, the lathe-hand does not go hungry. Upon a signal from the Central Committee the Stakhanov movement sprang up, all decked out with stunning records. The production norm of a Donietz mine being 7 tons of coal per day per digger (average in the Ruhr : 10 tons ; maximum : 16 to 17 tons), Alexis Stakhanov cut 100 tons in one day, August 31, 1935. The next day he was a celebrity, the whole publicity machine having started on signal. His picture was to be seen everywhere. The radio stations broadcast his remarks. He left the mine for conferences. Bobkov, meanwhile, had cut 159 tons in a day. Then Issachenko, 201 tons (September 10) ; later Artiukhov, 536 tons (November 4) ; Borissov, finally, 800 tons (800 !). In France and elsewhere, miners, more competent than I, have judged these records, which are better evaluated in the light of the general results of Stakhanovism in the same mines. In Gorlovka the average daily production reached in 220 days of sustained effort was 34 tons. Far from 800 tons or even from the modest 100 tons of Stakhanov ! But in October 1935 the mine where Stakhanov had worked yielded a production increase of only 7 per cent. In the Donietz region, it was from 15 to 20 per cent.

The Central Committee of the party feigned surprise in welcoming the initiative of the workers. It explained their passion for work by the improvement of the conditions of existence and *decreed the revision of all the norms of work.* The technicians who voiced objections were treated as saboteurs. The placards

showed a gigantic Stakhanov overturning the old, pretendedly scientific norms. The renewing of the collective labour contracts was delayed for several months. The workers understood immediately what was involved :

1. The increasing of the norms of production without a corresponding increase in wages.

2. The creation of a numerically small, well-paid labour aristocracy, which would set working conditions in general on the wrong track and would help the directors keep the masses moving.

Almost everywhere they reacted sharply. Stakhanovists had their heads smashed. Some were killed. The young communist who, in order to get a bonus or to quit the plant later on, tried to beat the record was considered a traitor by his shopmates. This resistance was broken by means of repression, and Stakhanovism was attenuated by generalizing it. The name was speedily worn down, in a few months, amidst abuse and even ridicule. The party committees were forced to react against the exaggerations of Stakhanovism. I knew a hospital director who thought up a favoured treatment for his Stakhanovist patients. . . . What remains of this campaign pursued with a totalitarian ardour ? An elevation of the norms which, all told, would hardly exceed 10 per cent, and a more appreciable growth of inequality among the workers, a small number of whom have gained the possibility of joining the privileged strata of society. A greater productivity of labour can be obtained, in general, only by more genuinely improving the material conditions of the workers.

I have read nothing more erroneous about Stakhanovism than these few lines culled from a French review :*

In these creative surroundings par excellence, *a collective and anonymous idea* had to germinate which found *by chance* in the person of Stakhanov its first *bold realizer*. . . .

* M. R. Chanel, in *Europe*, April 15, 1936.

I have italicized the falsest words of this sentence, in which is revealed a bumptiousness greater even than the incompetence of the author. And I am at a loss to discover what it is that obliges intellectuals, perhaps of good faith, to deal with such subjects out of the fullness of their ignorance. "Creative surroundings"—poverty, the flagging labour of undernourished workers, the bargaining at the factory, the police notations in the passports of the discharged workers, the Draconian legislation ? A "collective and anonymous idea" ? Stakhanov himself has told how he prepared his record together with the communist directors of the mine (who were themselves only executing the instructions of their superiors); the publicity of the totalitarian State did the rest. The element of "chance" amounts to nothing in all this, and Stakhanov, a zealous executor rather than a bold realizer, simply succeeded in making a career.

Many things, moreover, have been left unsaid about these exploits, such as that Stakhanov did not work alone or just anywhere in general, but with a full-selected crew and in a favourable spot ; that the Stakhanovist crews exerted such exhausting efforts that they included a supernumerary to replace the worker who might faint on the job ; that the Stakhanovists prepared their work for one or two hours before and one or two hours after the "day" of production, which raised the real duration of their labour from two to three hours. That once their exploit was accomplished, these production aces left the mine or the factory in order to carry on studies. . . . It is patent that they could not stay on without discrediting themselves and discrediting the propaganda built around them, for they would not succeed in maintaining the level of their own records.

Since Stakhanovism, the wage relations between the ordinary worker and the privileged worker vary from 1 to 10 and even to 20.

The participation of the workers in the manage-

ment of the enterprises practically ceased a long time ago. Of the shop democracy of the early days there subsisted a few vestiges up to 1935. The factory directors affected the air of former workers, made themselves accessible, and allowed themselves to be addressed familiarly. Since the rouble was resurrected, a contrary tendency has asserted itself. The well-dressed director must keep his distance.

III

THE CONDITION OF WOMEN

THE equality of rights prevents neither physiological inequality nor the consequences, particularly irksome for the woman, of the general indigence. The compulsory promiscuity of the overcrowded lodgings is especially painful to the young girl and the young woman. How many couples are unable to separate because it is impossible to find different lodgings ! In such cases the man liberates himself more easily, and forced cohabitation is less oppressive to him. The venereal dispensaries are crowded with infected youth who declare that they cannot be cured at home because of the impossibility of isolating themselves. The very low wage of the vast majority of young women forces them to seek a husband who is making good money, a military man or a party member. The surreptitious prostitution of all those who owe a tolerably good job to the amiability of store managers and office heads escapes, fortunately for the moralists, all statistical calculation.

Prostitution, properly speaking, subsists in most cities. Less widespread than in the big cities of the West, it is also more wretched. No legal regulation deals with it ; in practice, commissions provided with discretionary powers keep it under surveillance and sometimes prosecute it ; from time to time, on the eve of holidays or international congresses, sudden raids clean up Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa. Hundreds of women are arrested in one night and sometimes they are deported by administrative measure to the North or to Siberia. There they fall

into the clutches of administrators and the police. The housing crisis and the repression of pandering make prostitution in the big Russian cities something at once infamous and sordid. The girls bring their clients to the rear of unlighted courts, to churches that are being demolished, to corridors, to abandoned gardens, to hovels. Night-watchmen have been condemned for having rented to them the vestibules in front of the big stores. Bath-houses are sometimes their refuge. You can see the chauffeurs of trusts spending the night with their cars, picking up chance couples.

In 1928–29 the Soviet Press was ordered to suppress the section devoted to miscellaneous news. It has recently been re-established in the sense that the newspapers mention a burglary once a week in order to emphasize the promptness with which the guilty were captured. But in the days when the *Krasnaya Vechernaya Gazeta* (*Red Evening Gazette*) of Leningrad published, among other things, suicide lists, there were from twelve to fifteen a day ; young women were the majority in these horrible statistics, and they made free use of veronal, which could still be obtained. We have no reason to say that suicides are less numerous today. The poverty which drives young women to kill themselves forces just as many on to the pavements. Extremely wretched, hounded by the militia and by the committees of the housing co-operatives, prostitution ends necessarily by joining the very numerous underworld, made up of burglars, swindlers, bandits, pimps, and guerrillas of all kinds. And the result is that if the same laws are not applied to it, at least the same rigours are. Deportees have told me of the executions, by administrative decision, of "incorrigible prostitutes", put on the same basis as habitual criminals, their companions of the depths.

There exist in Moscow (and perhaps elsewhere) one or more model establishments for rehabilitation. I once read a description of them by Mme Margareta

Nelken, deputy to the Spanish Cortes. This lady saw girls living freely in the nice House, studying there, and making as much as 300 roubles a month. In that period I met pallid women workers who worked like beavers for half that sum and dreamed of getting, by protection, a pair of rubber shoes from the store reserved for the G.P.U. . . . They did not understand that it was necessary to begin by prostituting themselves in order to gain access to a House where they might finally earn a living ! Yet I admit that there is some laudable truth in the model establishments which tourists are taken to visit. But what a small place they occupy in life !

So long as the big majority of the young working women do not get enough from their work to feed, clothe, and house themselves—for it is not only a question of work, but of being able to live on the pay —the evil will remain without cure. If, in spite of everything, prostitution in the U.S.S.R. has been much less important in the last few years than in most of the other civilized countries, it is due to the fact that it is more profitable and even easier to engage in petty speculation on the market or to steal from the shop than to patrol the streets. Moreover, the demand has diminished as a result of the general indigence and probably, in the years of famine, of a physiological depression. As is obvious, these temporary causes are not the result of an improvement in the condition of women. Nothing is easier for a man supplied with means than to buy a woman, even outside the sphere of prostitution as such.*

The freedom of abortion, a capital conquest of the revolution, ceased to exist in the summer of 1935. Previously, circular letters had quietly strangled it. Henceforward, abortion is permitted only for medical reasons ; and it is punished by obloquy and fines for the patient, by prison for the operator. At the same

* This also exists in special forms, superintended and even organized, in the large hotels reserved for foreigners.

time the law grants premiums to large families.* One sees very well, alas, the reasons for this policy of natality, based upon the calculations of military experts who will tell you without blinking an eyelid how many millions of lives will have to be sacrificed in two years of war. . . . The return to obligatory maternity in a period of indigence is nothing less, for the woman, than an enormous aggravation of her condition. Then there is the matter of her rights and her dignity : socialism seems to us called upon to bring about the triumph of conscious and not of imposed maternity. Since the doctors received the order to advise against and to refuse abortions, the clandestine clientele of the abortionists has grown, the price of a medical abortion has doubled, with the result of an immediate aggravation of dangers, of suffering, of costs, and of servitude for the poorest among the women.

The new legislation has been justified by arguments which sound like bitter pleasantries. Do we not enjoy a free and happy life ? No more unemployment, all careers open to women. Why should they spurn the joys of maternity ? Things like this could be read throughout the Soviet Press—which no longer publishes suicides. . . . Doctors have proved the injuriousness of abortions. On being interviewed, old serfs have related their happiness in having had sixteen children, exceeded today by their happiness in living under the tutelage of the well-beloved Leader. Nobody has raised the question of the wage of the woman worker or of the condition of the child.

Other legal measures taken at the same time put a tax on divorce "in order to strengthen the family" : 50 roubles for the first time, 150 for the second, 300 roubles for any thereafter. The absolute ease of

* The encouragement given to large families is manifested in the allocations of 2000 roubles a year for five years for every child beginning with the seventh, and 5000 roubles for one year for every child beginning with the eleventh and 3000 annually for four years. These measures of serious support went immediately into effect. (Law of June 27, 1936.)

obtaining a divorce often worked against the woman, without a doubt ; but do the officials imagine that they have done well in keeping ill-matched couples together by means of a fine ? It may be expected that the legislator will soon go back upon another great reform achieved in the early years of the revolution : the legal recognition of the free union as having the same standing as marriage.

The establishment of paternity, the compulsory pension payable by the father for each child, with the amount fixed by the courts, paid vacations during pregnancy and nursing periods (recently raised from 42 to 56 days before and after birth), contraceptive freedom, the recognition of the free union, the freedom of divorce, the freedom of abortion, the equality of rights—these were what women gained from the proletarian revolution. One can see on what points these gains have been compromised, all the more so because the economic condition of woman and the place assigned to her in life by custom and physiology are still far from assuring her genuine equality.

The social differentiation obliges us to distinguish the various conditions of Soviet women. The upper strata of society, especially numerous in the centres, have produced the type of elegant and indolent lady, who follows the fashions, the theatre, the concerts, who is desolated when she is unable to get the latest dance records from abroad, who tans herself every year on the beaches of the Crimea or the Caucasus. I have heard the elegant in the literary salons praising the enthusiasm of the Donietz miners and the political wisdom of the Leader. I have seen others, fat and dressed in transparent silks, leaning on the arms of aviation officers, walking past children with bellies swollen from famine, who moaned softly as they lay stretched out in the dust. Flies resting on their eyelids and lips tormented them. The ladies turned their heads away. After all, they were only little Kazaks or Kirghiz. . . .

Below this feminine aristocracy is the average housewife of modest means, as needy as she is everywhere else. Still lower—and she constitutes the majority—is the woman of the people, a worker or peasant, who does the washing, goes for water to the fountain or to the river (in winter, it is to a hole punctured in the ice), takes care of the animals, raises the children, receives the drunken man at the end of the week, stands in line in front of the stores, buys a few metres of satinette in order to resell them and, thanks to this brilliant stroke of business, is able to provide shoes for the youngest. The foreign littérateurs do not come to question her while travelling. Disfigured and aged at thirty-five, she sometimes takes to drink. Then you hear her—on the revolutionary holidays—singing in a discordant voice the old popular plaints. After her fiftieth year she draws a checkered cotton handkerchief or a black one (according to the religious tradition) around her head and from time to time walks for kilometres in her old shoes over dusty roads, through mud or snow, in order to kneel in the only church that has not been shut down and which is always far away—terribly far away. . . .

The gains of the revolution would be immense in the realm of morals if poverty and the lack of freedom did not compromise them. For the woman, as for her husband, the whole problem comes down to two propositions : a rise in wages and a restitution of rights.

IV

THE YOUTH

IN little less than twenty years several generations of abandoned children have changed places in the depths of society. At first there was that of the civil war, numerically the least important. Then that of the great famine of the Volga (1922–23), estimated at several millions. Later that of the collectivization. Millions of tillers were dispossessed and deported: this doomed millions of children to perish or to roam. I saw them in Leningrad and in Moscow, living in sewers, in news kiosks, in the vaults of cemeteries where they were the undisturbed masters; holding conferences at night in urinals; travelling on the roofs of trains or on the rods below. They would emerge, pestiferous, black with sweat, to ask a few kopecks from travellers and to lie in wait for the chance to steal a valise. On foot, all along the roads, crouched at the back of cattle-trucks under warm and stinking litters, hidden between cases that they pilfered, they descended in the spring from the large cities towards the warm countries. They were driven back, but they began all over again. Neither Dickens nor Jack London ever wrote anything comparable to the backwater of their existence. Natural selection, assisted by repressions, eliminated many of them. The lucky ones established themselves as bootblacks at the beaches. Could they doubt, while enduring the feeble jokes of the high functionaries and their ladies, that they were witnessing the foundation of a classless society?

The autumn come, they went back to the capitals

to sell matches, cigarettes, and cocoa, to install themselves in the vestibules of stores where it was warm and they could pretend to render a service to the client by opening the door when they had the chance. They gathered together to sleep in the still warm vat of tar used to repair streets. Tousled little heads, lousy as could be but full of shrewd wisdom, stuck out of it in a circle and the passer-by could overhear enigmatic remarks made in slang and adorned with filthy oaths. More than one dry stroke—without the shedding of blood—or a wet one—you understand? —was meditated there.

I saw others starving to death in the ruins of demolished churches, in public gardens. Nothing could be done about it. The Children's Home refused to take in everybody and you were barely fed there. These children preferred to starve in liberty. The authorities ordered raids. But where were they to be hidden? "What's this?" they said to the police. "You can't steal, you can't sell cigarettes, you can't sleep on a bench? So we can't even live, citizen? Aren't we human beings any longer?" I have heard such remarks, but I never heard an answer to them.

Most of them, of course, become criminals. Thereupon they are treated as such and no longer as young vagabonds. Concentration camps, the forests of the North, canal-digging, prison, escape, summary execution of second offenders, the unrecorded finish of famished youth who perish in the course of an interminable transfer in an icy coach. . . . I have known several who, having fallen into some decent spot, under a humane and not stupid camp chief (there are more of them than is realized), became men, toughened at the job and handier than the average mortal. I have run into teachers, a poet, skilled workers who were former pickpockets. They had found the Road to Life, as in the film of that name—a fairly good film, truthful in its way. Others, just as numerous,

whom the law had made liable to the death penalty, took other roads, unknown to the film-makers. . . . We were talking on the street, at the edge of the pavement. A drunkard lay a few steps away on the snow. Two urchins of about twelve came over to him, with the nimbleness of monkeys, drew off his boots, and plunged into the throng. Sly ones.

Those who were four or five years old at the beginning of the collectivization, and who survived it, are reaching their twelfth year : there must be quite a number of them. . . . In addition, poverty flings its annual contingent upon the streets and the highways. It is not yet finished.

Above the abandoned youth, in the social hierarchy, stands the working youth of town and country. In spite of everything, it is vigorous, alert, full of a consuming desire to live, untutored, rude, bellicose, inclined to drink, practical, not idealistic, hardened against pain and hunger, skilled in all the sports, narrow-minded, and sure of itself. It joins the Communist Youth because you have got to do that in order to get a better job or to carry on your studies more easily. It flings itself in throngs towards all the branches of technique and of knowledge. The relations between the sexes there are simple and rather healthy, in spite of the often affected brutality of the young male, the false disdain of petty-bourgeois prejudices, the genuine sexual freedom. By and large, co-education all along the line yields good results. Young people seek each other's society, they fall in love, and the proportion of happy unions is certainly not less than it is anywhere else. Virginity has lost a part of its price without jealousy having appreciably declined. Poor, this youth is completely absorbed in the struggle for life. As soon as it has escaped hunger—more or less—it thinks of clothing itself ; coquetting resumes its rights and, as the privileged set the example, it seeks ingenuously to imitate the clothing and the manners of the West. A French or German fashion-magazine

makes the round of the city, passing from hand to hand, violently disputed. (These magazines were prohibited for many years ; I do not know if they have been authorized since dancing, formerly also forbidden, was recommended and since clothing-display salons were opened in Moscow.)

The major part of the city youth carries on its studies by taking advantage of the support of the State, of scholarships, subsidies, common lodgings. The students live merrily in a poverty that is sometimes heart-rending, in dirty dormitories, with dirty cots, furnished with benches of damp wood. However, I do have the impression that even in the towns remote from the centre, their condition is improving —and almost prepossessing and well-kept common lodgings are encountered with increasing frequency. There are two kinds of institutions of higher learning : those of the party and the others. The first, the more privileged, train the communist functionaries. The periodic or permanent purgings strike dark blows there. Access to the others is comparatively easy, but higher studies, necessitating expenses and protection —for you must first of all be sent into a university city by the communist authorities—are in reality accessible only to the sons and daughters of the privileged, plus a contingent of students taken from among the workers by the services of the party.

The very large majority of the young people must content itself with professional studies of an inferior or average degree. The custom of managed studies has been established, which provokes lively discontent. This city, this school, furnishes mechanics, agronomists, or veterinarians almost exclusively : and you will not change anything, you have no choice in the matter. After the managed studies, the administrative placing : you have pursued, under pressure, the course of an agronomical *tekhnicum* for three years ; your agronomist's certificate obtained, you are sent for several years, without anybody bothering to con-

sult you, into some remote *colkhoz** a hundred kilometres from the railway. You finally come out of it, with tenacity and address, but only after a long period of time. The young communist will succeed sooner than anyone else in establishing himself in an average city provided with baths and moving-picture theatres. Above all, if he knows how to flatter and serve the authorities.

In the intellectual milieu, properly so called, of the capitals is enacted the drama of the nonconformist youth. Should the student be ever so little suspect, he will not be allowed to finish his studies. I have known doctors, physicists, and engineers who for years multiplied their applications and their labours without being allowed to take the final examination which would give them the right to a diploma. One of them was told : "Renew an engagement for a year in a *colkhoz*, give proof of the right spirit, and we shall see." Another was given no answer at all.

This youth, it goes without saying, has no means whatsoever of expression, no moral activity. In 1936 the Communist Youth (the Comsomol) lost their feeble semblance of political activity, which they had carried on for the sake of form. Only the archives of the G.P.U. will some day throw light on their state of mind. They are divided into several profoundly different milieux under fairly uniform appearances. An important and influential minority of young communists, strongly worked upon by the bureaucratic apparatus, invested with a certain authority, better dressed, lodged, and fed than the other youth, faithfully professes the official ideology. Imbued with the new patriotism, it is preparing for the war. It carries out zealously all orders, and lives on oversimplified ideas and approved texts. "With us, socialism reigns—with them, in the capitalist universe, it is terror, the crisis, exploitation. Our army is the strongest in the world" . . . etc. It practises with ardour the

* Collective farm.

cult of the Leader. It forms the subordinate cadres of the power and of the Army.

More numerous, the youth of the middle stratum adapts itself passively to these young communists, imitates their manner of speaking, but with a profoundly different nature. On the whole, it is interested only in technique and in careers. Asphyxiating and mediocre one-way politics bores it without deceiving it or making it rebel (in view of the total futility of rebellion). It soon learns to show itself prudent in its reflections, assiduous in its studies, as zealous as it must be in the carrying-out of orders, and it learns also to keep its dignity well concealed. Young communists and non-party youth unite with an emphatic absence of personality—how many superficial observers have taken it for a collective spirit !—an implacable individualism. The Comsomol student who astonishes you by his feigned or genuine inability to think differently from the editorials of *Pravda* will jostle a pregnant woman at the tram-car stop in order to get on ahead of her. He will carry on a shady struggle by means of intrigues, bribery, and denunciation in order to obtain a room, will march over the body of a comrade in order to have himself sent to Moscow. . . .

More primitive, still maintaining old traditions, both good and bad, like those of songs, of dances, of courting young girls, of family and local solidarity, of collective drinking bouts, of scraps of street against street and quarter against quarter, the poorest youth—and the most numerous—seems to me to be more appealing and less deformed by the bureaucratic régime. What handsome lads, what dazzling young girls, with somewhat heavy features, their nature so singularly unpolished in the intellectual sense of the word and yet so fine and rich, enduring and prodigious ! Co-education and the moral equality of the sexes, as well as the effort to draw young girls into sports with a view to military preparation, make comrade-

ships virile and sometimes mark out young couples who will end by being able to live. . . . At the other pole of this youth of the people is located, in the capitals, a gamy Bohemia and an intelligentsia among whom every kind of dissoluteness discreetly flourishes.

The entire youth is evolving towards a succinct realism. Smitten with technique, thirsting for well-being, supple in adaptation, hardened against pain and hunger; the word "Americanism" still best expresses its spirit. Few general ideas, no formulated ethics, no conscious idealism, an aversion to politics. Even among Comsomols, conversational subjects touching upon politics are carefully avoided, less out of fear than out of boredom. It is so vain and so empty ! They live on elementary notions, and pretty poor ones at times. The young man to whom you explain that twenty daily newspapers of different opinions appear at the same time in Paris will not understand you well, even if he consents to believe you. "But how is that possible ?" he will ask, quite dumbfounded.

Nevertheless, all the needs of man ferment in this magnificent human dough. The Secret Service purges it unceasingly. Those under thirty years of age are in the majority in all the places of detention. Here are a few episodic facts that came by chance to my attention. In 1926, 1928, 1929 a strange movement of youth was born in the university centres. Communists and non-party men came together to form apolitical socialist study groups in order to pose all the problems among themselves. They hardly concealed themselves, not thinking that they were committing a crime. In Moscow and Kharkov they even published a review in manuscript: *The Struggle* (*Borba*). The G.P.U. espied it without delay. They were all arrested and interned, the "ringleaders" were sent to those corners from which there is virtually no return. At the same time a Scout movement was also destroyed. The Jewish Zionist Youth has for many years been subjected

to repressions, renewed from season to season. A Socialist Youth was formed at the beginning of the collectivization in Moscow and Leningrad, and the whole membership was flung into prison. The young Trotskyists today set the tone of the communist opposition, in the "solitaries" and in the concentration camps.

V

PEASANTS, ARTISANS, ADMINISTRATORS, BELIEVERS

THE Peasants.—There are rich *colkhozes** and there are poor ones. Within the *colkhozes* themselves, the distribution of work and of profits is unequal in the extreme. The administrators and their entourage of "activists" are first served. Then there are the poor agriculturists, the rich, and the average —depending upon the individual parcel of land, upon the relations one has with the managers, upon the number of workers and of mouths there are in the family.

The welfare of the *colkhoz* depends upon the land, the means of communication, and, above all, upon the authorities who tax it. In the regions remote from railways, a good deal is consumed on the spot and life is better, but there are no newspapers, no manufactured articles. In certain frontier regions the population, after being carefully purged, enjoys a favourable treatment. In the regions provided with railways, State commerce offers the peasants gramophones, bicycles, rice powder, dentifrices, silk hosiery. They buy them ; they have even been seen buying pianos, and the Press has made a big to-do about these signs of enrichment. As usual, the truth is somewhat different. The agriculturists buy everything they can in order not to hoard up a currency which they have good reason to distrust. To gramophones they prefer shoes ; to luxury articles, ordinary cottons ; but

* Collective agricultural farms ; most of the agriculturists are organized in agricultural co-operatives of a sort, which are closely supervised by the party and the State.

they do not find any on the market, articles of prime necessity being produced in insufficient quantities.

In order to restrict the purchasing power of the peasant while compelling him to sell his personal reserves of grain to the State (to the State which for wheat pays him a fifth or a seventh of what it receives for it as bread), there was conceived the system of receipts for the delivery of grain. The buyer is served in a store only if, when paying, he can prove that he has delivered so much grain to the State for so much money. He is allowed to make purchases in conformity with this sum. These receipts, naturally, become the object of speculation.

The vast majority of the peasants live more poorly than before the collectivization, that is, on the whole, at a level lower than the pre-War. In 1925–26 what they gained from the nationalization of the soil they lost in part because of the dearness of manufactured articles. But after having known the terror and the famine, and having passed through the crises of revolt and despair, they have returned little by little to more pacific states of mind, especially since they were left with something to eat. In 1933–34 they generally wished for war, in order to obtain arms and wait to see what would happen. . . . They made no secret of it. In 1935 I saw this desire give way to the fear of war.

Even less than the workers do the peasants have the right to move about. The system of interior passports does not permit them to establish themselves in the city. Before being sold a railway ticket in a station, they are asked to present a paper from the *colkhoz* authorizing the trip ; and this regardless of the passport, which is demanded in any case. It is true that trips are made afoot or by chance means and that a mass of petty complicities makes existence in the country easier than in the city.

On the whole, the peasants whom I knew did not appear to me to be reactionary in the old sense of the word. Nobody regrets the old régime, nor would one

desire its return ; but there is a thoroughgoing hostility to the local and central bureaucracy. The local functionaries perish fairly often in motor-car accidents about which few entertain any illusions. Others, of less importance, have their faces banged up in dark corners. I even doubt if the spirit of individual property is deeply anchored in the Russian peasant, at least so far as the land is concerned ; the advantages of large-scale collective cultivation are easily understood. The peasants would like a "real régime of the soviets", which would restore their rights to them and would let them organize as they please.

In 1936 a singular reform was achieved in the Northern Caucasus, in Central Asia, and in various points of the U.S.S.R. The *sovkhozes*,* agricultural exploitations of the State, in which the cultivators were only wage-workers, those huge grain factories about which such a noisy propaganda was once made, were liquidated in large number and their lands distributed to the *colkhozes*—that is, to the peasant collectives.

The Artisans.—Long encouraged for formality's sake, because their industries furnished a mass of consumption articles that the State produces insufficiently or not at all, the artisans were constrained by fiscal pressure to enter into *artels* or co-operative associations, controlled by the party. The thing was done very simply. The meagre possessions of the small watchmaker were confiscated without any form of due process, and he was told : "Go to work in the *artel* !" (This was in 1931–32.) The amount of taxes required from a small shoemaker was trebled without reason. He shut up shop and went to ask for a job in the *artel*.

The *artel* makes the artisan work eight hours a day for a wage always below his income as an independent. It makes him pay a co-operator's share, which is usually large (several hundred roubles), and it imposes State loans upon him. The artisan finds himself deprived of his freedom, exploited,

* Soviet farms.

defrauded ; he works badly. Everyone knows that if the *artels* work at low prices, their production is worse than mediocre. The only exceptions to this rule are those which, established on a commercial basis, have become fairly good businesses and illicit enterprises for their members. Returning home in the evening, the artisan works clandestinely for his private clientele and works honestly. The *artel* becomes the place of variegated combinations : it solicits and obtains credits or subsidies, it enters into semi-illicit or entirely illicit traffic. Its book-keeping is always false. From time to time it goes bankrupt or amalgamates with other *artels*, a trick used to avoid paying off debts or to reimburse secured credits. A reorganization follows, which is primarily a change of signs. Sometimes the administrators go to prison like anybody else ; but more often they get out of it, being in the party and provided with useful connections. There is no life without risks, is there ? In the meantime, the combinations are everywhere.

Business.—We now come to the unique domain of *blatt*, a Russian slang term which signifies "combination". From the bottom of economic life to its summit the combination reigns. Heads of trusts, directors of banks or of plants, administrators of State commerce, administrators of *colkhozes* or of *artels*, store managers, employees—all resort to it every day. All the wheels of the colossal machine are oiled and fouled by it. Its role is as great as that of planning, because without it the plan would never be realized. The combination of a multitude of departments makes up for the insuffiicency of wages, for the defects in statistics, for administrative negligence, for bureaucratic unintelligence ; it piles miracle upon miracle. A shoe-factory director receives, in accordance with the plan, a permit for a ton of leather to be taken from the neighbouring tannery in February. The tannery, even though it conforms with the directives, answers that it finds it impossible to deliver these raw materials

before March. The production plan of the shoe factory is going up in smoke ; but our director is not upset by it. He expected that. "Look here, old man," he will say to his colleague from the tannery, "you wouldn't pull a trick like that on me, would you ?" "Certainly not, we only need to get together on it. Service for service, eh ? The tanners are lacking shoes, dear comrade ; couldn't you have five hundred pairs for me within the fortnight ?" In the end, the tanners will be shod—not so well, to be sure, as their factory director and his family, whose boots the whole town will admire ; and the shoe plant will execute its plan, which will bring its directors premiums, a banquet, et cetera. It will be clearly perceived, when the problem of transporting the raw materials from one plant to the other arises, that there are neither cars nor trucks available, for entirely peremptory reasons ; but here again the beneficent combination will intervene. Railway men and lorry-drivers will find that it pays.

The Believers.—The campaign of dechristianization, officially closed in 1935, led to the destruction of most of the churches and among them a number of historic monuments. A commission presided over by the academician Luppol had previously taken care to alter the classification of the major part of the monuments that it was supposed to conserve, in order to offer them to the crowbars of the wreckers. Right in Moscow, churches that were old works of art have disappeared. At the height of the persecutions and the demolitions, the authorities demanded of the Moscow clergy a public declaration affirming that it enjoyed the fullest freedom and that if the places of worship were closing up it was because the believers were losing interest in them. . . . The priests naturally signed everything that was wanted, and their statement was published. In the Kremlin, the Voznessensky and Chudov monasteries, dating from the fourteenth century, and the Voznessenskaya Cathedral, with five gilded cupolas, built in 1519 and reconstructed in

1721, have given way to one of the most comfortable barracks, whose façade rises above the Red Square.

In Orenburg, where I was in exile until 1936, there were about fifteen churches : three dated back to the founding of the city, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and memories of the rebellion of Pugachev were associated with them. All of them, except one that is without historical or artistic interest, have been demolished. But let us return to Moscow. Wreckers, who think themselves urbanists because they prefer a square of glistening asphalt to a masterpiece of centuries gone by, razed the admirable Sukhareva tower, a tall red belfry built in the days of Peter I, one of the architectural beauties of the old city. The responsibility for this vandalism devolves exclusively upon the bureaucratic régime, because it goes without saying that if the population had had the slightest possibility of making itself heard, it would not have permitted either the persecution of believers, which was at once a revolting abuse and a political blunder, or the destruction of so large a part of its historic patrimony.

The anti-religious persecution coincided with the collectivization and was only a derivative of the general discontent of that epoch. Religious holidays were interdicted when the scarcity forbade any increased consumption on the occasion of the festivals ; as soon as the scarcity diminished, the prohibition fell into desuetude and the authorities themselves began recommending the putting-up of Christmas trees. Religious life seems to me to be down-trodden rather than actually wiped out. You arrive in towns where only heaps of brick are left of the churches. It is explained to you that the Soviet decided on these demolitions upon the unanimous request of the workers. Everybody knows how they vote for resolutions of this kind in the shops, how they vote for no matter what resolution, out of an inability to do otherwise and in their hurry to get home. It will be added that the believers offered no objections. You doubt

that. They have even refused to renew the rental lease of the houses of worship. For that, it was enough to quintuple the rent. The Free Association of the Godless numbers 15,000 dues-paying members. . . . The well-intentioned tourist takes note of these results and meditates upon the end of the old beliefs.

He does not hear the women who walk through the icy streets, murmuring as they see a funeral that "We know what a man is worth today : less than a dog you throw into a hole". Be patient and observe. You will learn that the members of the atheistic society are recruited on paper in the enterprises and confine themselves to paying their dues without being invited to do anything else whatever ; and that many of them are probably believers who find it wise not to make the fact public. Enter into the confidence of these people : you will see them celebrate all the religious holidays. You will learn that, in spite of everything, there is in the country a small church that remained open, discreet and perhaps forgotten, to which people come from fifty kilometres around ; that they hold a collective mass there for all the dead of a year's quarter, piously enumerated ; that it is crowded at Easter, because the whole countryside passes through it ; that such-and-such a young communist was married in church ; that the sects live on, burrowed in the families, accustomed to persecution for many centuries.

Nevertheless, the youth of the cities appears to be free-thinking. But such is its need of an intellectual and spiritual life that it is visibly ready to welcome any teaching with an immense receptivity ; so much so that the return to a certain religious tolerance, especially given the prohibition of any living socialist propaganda, will certainly have the effect of bringing a part of this youth to the churches and the sects.

Mystics are treated as counter-revolutionists, arrested, interned or deported. I followed, in the intellectual milieux of Leningrad, several such cases.

The Social Differentiation.—Official statistics, far

from furnishing us with figures on this cardinal subject, seem drawn up for the purpose of screening them from us. They classify the People's Commissar and the factory director under the head of employees on the same basis as the office boy. They do not distinguish between the president of the *colkhoz* and the most disinherited member of the peasant community ; the Stakhanovist and the labourer are just workers ; the servant is a worker or else she disappears under the head of miscellaneous. We shall pose the question in these terms : What part of the population enjoys an ease modestly defined by the satisfying of these needs—good food, good clothing, good lodgings ? For it is plain that this part of the population is the only one interested in the maintenance of the régime.

It comprises : the cadres of the State, of the trade unions, of the party (they are all one, for the party trains all the cadres) ; the cadres and the personnel of the Secret Service, its special troops included ; the cadres of industry and trade, formed by communist administrators and non-party specialists or technicians ; the cadres of education with the exception of teachers, whose condition is still precarious ; the doctors, jurists, artists, writers ; the cadres of the Army and the Fleet ; the cadres of the *colkhozes*, administrators and communist organizers—say, 1,000,000 persons out of the 250,000 *colkhozes*. The labour aristocracy !

My computations have led me to estimate these favoured elements at a minimum of 10,000,000 persons, a figure to be doubled to include the families. Trotsky estimates them at from 10 to 12 millions, say, about 25,000,000 souls with the families,* and concludes : "Twelve to fifteen per cent of the population, that is the authentic basis of the absolutist ruling circles." The rest of the population, 85 to 88 per cent, lives in primitive conditions, in discomfort, in want, in misery, or else it benefits from a well-being that is illicit and concealed, and therefore mingled with insecurity.

* Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed.*

VI

MANAGED SCIENCE, LITERATURE, AND PEDAGOGY

SOCIAL wars cannot be favourable to scientific research and to literary creation. They imply, in this sense as in many others, a sacrifice to the future. The material and moral enrichment of the masses is acquired only after the victory and the healing of the wounds. The intellectual production of Russia, therefore, was feeble during the years of combat. With the coming of peace, since 1922, life was resumed in the new order with an astonishing joy, ardour, and variety.

Soviet literature was born in the two or three years from 1921 to 1923, with names known before and now renewed and enhanced (Serafimovich, Alexis Tolstoy, Mikhail Prishvin, Lidin, Ehrenburg, Marietta Shaginian, Zamiatin), and a throng of new names of young writers already full of experience and pith : Boris Pilnyak, Constantin Fedin, Leonid Leonov, Vsevolod Ivanov, Fedor Gladkov, Yury Tinianov, Mikhail Zostchenko, Mikhail Sholokhov, Nicolas Nikitin. A little later, or in the second rank, appeared Tarassov-Rodionov, Lydia Seifulina, Libedinsky, Pavlenko, Tikhonov. Within a few years poets produced a magnificent work : Yessenin, Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Selvinsky, Tikhonov, Mandelstam. One is stupefied when one considers this glittering début of Soviet literature, or records the audacity and the candour of the writer under a régime barely emerged from the terror.

Many of the works of that period would no longer be publishable today ; they are, moreover, either

withdrawn from the libraries or scarcely tolerated. Intellectual freedom is being extinguished in every domain with the victory of the bureaucracy. A period is opening up of increasing sterility, of spiritless official propaganda, of stereotypes approved by the bureaux as in other times and places by the Congregation : "literature in uniform", in the just words of Max Eastman.

It would be tedious to retrace the vicissitudes of this progressive suffocation. In 1929 two masterful writers of the young generation were suddenly denounced by the entire Press, upon a slogan emanating from the Central Committee, as public enemies—one for having written about life in the provinces a novel of a realism designated as "pessimistic and counter-revolutionary" (Pilnyak, *Island Woods*) ; the other for having published abroad in translation a work condemned by the censorship because it was a strong satire directed at bureaucratic-State-ism (Zamiatin, *We*). Pilnyak consented to all the desirable concessions and even rewrote his book in the optimistic genre. Zamiatin, firmer, was forced to expatriate himself. The young generation swallowed it all without flinching, even though Gorky, questioned by a Leningrad writer who wanted to know "if the moment has come to have ourselves deported", is supposed to have replied : "It seems to me, yes." Nobody had read the incriminated works, but everybody condemned them. There is always an hour when the redeeming choice between cowardice and courage is possible. It was in 1929 that the Soviet writers abdicated their dignity. Their decay had already begun, it is true, and it required years, years marked by famous suicides : Sergei Yessenin, a lyrical poet, opened the funereal series ; Andrei Sobol, writer and tormented revolutionist, followed him ; Mayakovsky, social poet, renowned, rich, and loaded with honours, blew out his brains a few days after having adhered to the party's general line in literature. Young ones like

Victor Dmitriev passed away without noise. . . . Meanwhile, let us note, the writers have grown rich.

To work your hardest to create requires a tenacious courage that contrasts with the absence of any civic courage ; and extraordinary faculties of adaptation and mimicry. Some writers take refuge in the centuries gone by. There at least they are fairly tranquil. To this evasion of the present we owe some good historical novels (Chapigin, *Stenka Razin*, Tinianov, *The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar*, Alexis Tolstoy, *Peter I*).

In April 1932 the bureaucrats of the rod of the Associations of Proletarian Writers, who lorded it brutally over letters, learned one morning from the papers that they were suppressed : decision of the Leader. All the old literary groups were to be dissolved and refounded—after a purging—into a new association of Soviet writers, directed by its communist fraction. The men of letters proved themselves docile. They had been enrolled, enthusiastically, into shock brigades, obliged to produce on an industrial scale works on the Plan. Regardless of circumstances, they had voted all the death penalties that had been demanded from them, they had sung the praises of the hangmen in verse and prose, they had paraphrased the most unbelievable indictments, they had demonstrated in the streets against the Pope and the Second International, they had promised in solemn resolutions to give the régime "Dnieprostroys of literature"—to "catch up with and surpass" Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. . . . Without uttering a word of protest, they had allowed the arrest of all those among them that were scheduled for arrest.

They had submitted to all the censures with a sort of euphoric resignation. And what censorships ! Mutilated translations, bowdlerized biographies (the conversion of Rimbaud is suppressed from the Russian translation of J.-M. Carré's book, so that the Rimbaud case, in Russia, finds itself grossly simplified), entire works condemned. The Writers Publishers of Lenin-

grad was forced into bankruptcy under my very eyes, by the prohibition of several works that were on the point of appearing, previously authorized by the censor : a novel on the N.E.P. by Wolf Ehrlich, if my memory serves me well. . . . You would not believe it, the N.E.P. having become obsolete (it was in 1930–31). A novel by Roman Goul on the revolutionary terrorism of times past : it might have given troublesome ideas to youth. A novel by Helen Tagger : this excellent writer was not right on the line ; in addition, she was the wife of a deportee. Poems by Kliuev : too much Old-Russian sentiment in it. The monograph of a danseuse : was that a time for dancing ? The novel of Kuklin on the Red Army : deplorably realistic because there were drunken officers in it. . . .

The director of literary publications in Moscow told me in 1928, after having called upon me to abjure : "Even if you produce a masterpiece every year, not a line of yours will appear !" Thereupon the translation of my novel, *Les Hommes dans la Prison*, already set up in pages with the censor's authorization to print 10,000 copies, was destroyed. None of my books appears in the U.S.S.R. When I was finally able to leave Russia in April 1936, the censors withheld, along with my papers and personal souvenirs, all my handwritten works, the fruit of years of intense labour : an eye-witness account of the events that took place in France in 1910–13, a novel, some poems. All of them were taken, in spite of the flagrant illegality of the procedure.*

Censorship in various degrees. The Writers' Union has its docket where every man of letters has a

---

* The Italian communist emigration knows Gatto Mammone well, as an old militant who lived in the U.S.S.R. for many years. For more than twenty years Mammone had been at work on a history of the labour movement of Europe. Taking refuge in Russia, he made the mistake of taking along his manuscripts and documents. *The Soviet censor robbed him of everything.*

political label which is taken into consideration when deciding on publication, size of the edition, republication of his books. The editors pick a book to pieces before accepting it. The bureaux of the party, consulted in doubtful cases, sometimes designate functionaries to go over the work with the author. The manuscript then passes to the Board of Letters, attached to the Commissariat of Public Education, but in reality subordinated to the Secret Service. There it receives the necessary stamp of approval. Set up, the proof sheets are submitted to the censorship proper, likewise subordinated to the Secret Service, which casts a final glance at it, not without asking for all sorts of alterations if it so pleases. The work having appeared, it is not yet finished. It is up to the competent departments to recommend it to the libraries, which instantly assures it an unlimited sale, or to have it declared pernicious in the newspaper notes, which may mean its withdrawal from circulation. . . .

The same works, the same authors, may be declared, in turn, excellent or detestable, for political reasons. Riazanov, the biographer of Marx, had just been consecrated as a great man in all the official publications (and his merits as a savant and a revolutionist are truly great), when he became irksome and was put behind bars. The head of the cultural department of the Central Committee, Stetsky, immediately denounced him in *Pravda* as an overrated mediocrity. "We took him for a beacon", this blackguard writes textually ; "he was only a candle." But with what can one compare people who are capable of mistaking a candle for a beacon ? . . . Galina Serebriakova was still a reputed communist woman of letters on August 1, 1936, the author of highly esteemed works : *The Youth of Marx*, *The Women of the French Revolution*. At the end of the same month, flung into prison on suspicion of concealed inclination to opposition, she is treated by the semi-official

Literary Gazette of Moscow as a counter-revolutionist devoid of any talent.

On the other hand, almost world-wide reputations are built up in a few days by publicity methods borrowed from the American trusts. The order need only be given to all the sections of the Communist International to have their publishing houses translate a seventh-rate work ; the entire communist and communist-inspired Press will proclaim its merits, and that may last for a certain time until it is perceived that it is nothing but a shabby fabrication. In the country itself, reputations are made as follows : upon a sign from the bureaux, the communist cells in the factory start the discussion of a book, the "masses of readers" invite the author to lecture, the libraries boost him and so do the ships of the line, there is created a whole "spontaneous movement" which draws the admiration of old men of letters from abroad who are expressly invited.

Pilnyak never having succeeded in getting back completely into good graces, probably because he cannot help feeling and thinking like a man formed by the revolution, the favour of the Leader has granted first place in Soviet letters to Count Alexis Tolstoy, semi-official writer under the old régime, White émigré from 1918 to 1923, since rallied to the Soviet régime, rich and right-thinking. "My *Peter I*", said Alexis Tolstoy to a Western journalist, "was printed in 1,500,000 copies, and you won't find one in the bookshops. . . ." The author being paid at the rate of from 350 to 750 roubles—according to his personal quota —per forme of 16 pages and printing of 5000 copies, it is not difficult to calculate that this novel alone, where it was believed that flattering allusions to the Leader could be seen, brought him millions of roubles. Besides—let us permit him to speak—"the State gives the writer all the material facilities. It procures him ease, rest, tranquillity, homes in town and country. . . ." The profession of encomiast of the

régime is thus one of the most remunerative ; here we are carried off in a sublime flight a thousand leagues from the poverty wages in textile.

Only—there are risks. At the exact moment that this interview appeared the Union of Soviet Writers purged itself, and sanctioned with copious applause the expulsion, arrest, deportation, and execution of a number of its members.*

In ten years literature and science managed by these police methods have shown their sterility. Not because there is a lack of printing-paper ; but not a single powerfully inspired work has appeared, not a single Marxian work worth recalling, in the country of triumphant Marxism. The last philosophical school, that of Deborin, a dry and limited logician who ruled over philosophy for years, was destroyed, some time ago, by an administrative campaign. Deborin himself, before becoming an academician in order the better to hold his tongue, tried to commit suicide. Political economy? Rubin and Finn-Yenotayevsky are in prison, forbidden to raise the questions of the exploitation of labour, of inflation, of the circulation of commodities, of the standard of living of the workers, of the *per-capita* consumption of the population, of the distribution of the national income, of what part of it the bureaucracy consumes, of socialism in a single country.

History? Political fortunes have been made by rewriting it to suit the taste of the day, as in the

* The terrible suspicion of Trotskyism thus befell Galina Serebriakova, Tarassov-Rodionov, Grudskaya, Trostchenko, Vegman, Selivanovsky, Ivan Katayev, Ivan Zarudny. Kamenev belonged to the Writers' Union, like another of those shot in the Zinoviev trial, Pikel. Long before that, there had been imprisoned or deported : the poet Vladimir Piast (said to have committed suicide in his deportation) ; Ossip Mandelstam, one of the masters of Russian verse today ; the poet Nicolas Kliuev ; the poet Pavel Vassiliev (who was tried as a common criminal) ; the children's writer Biankis ; the philosopher Ivanov-Razumnik, author of a *History of Contemporary Russian Thought* and of a *Shtchedrin* ; and many others. At the beginning of his deportation, Christian Rakovsky wrote a voluminous *History of the Revolution in the Ukraine*, a work all the more important because its author took an active part in the events. This work has not been published.

case of Tal, author of the first history of the Red Army in which the name of Trotsky is not mentioned ; like Lavrenti Beria, who began his career by recasting the history of the Bolshevik organizations of the Caucasus in such a manner as makes a star out of Stalin. Anyshev—author of a good *Essay in the History of the Civil War*, the only one worth mentioning—and Nevsky—author of a history of the party, fairly good and withdrawn from circulation for just that reason —are both in prison. In prison also are the historians Seidel and Friedland, whose gentleness nevertheless remains inexhaustible. Maxim Gorky, after having altered, in a sense unfavourable to Trotsky, the remarks of Lenin which he had set down in his memoirs, was put at the head of the editorial board of a *History of the Civil War* in ten volumes, in which Trotsky is presented as the saboteur of the revolution and Stalin as its saviour. The *Memoirs* of Krupskaya have been done over again and edited by a special commission which did not permit the widow of Lenin to write a line freely. . . .

The Soviet encyclopaedias are periodically revised in order to bring them up to date in the political sense of the term. In the second edition of the *Small Encyclopaedia* you do not find the forecasts formulated in the first on the consumption of the masses at the end of the first Five-Year Plan. . . . The biographies of the former leaders of the party vary from edition to edition. An encyclopaedia of three large volumes, which cost the State years of the labour of hundreds of specialists and millions of roubles, was torn up entirely in Leningrad in 1932. The libraries are continually purged, and if the works of Riazanov and Trotsky are not burned it is only because it is found more practical to tear them up quietly.

The natural sciences? Geologists have been imprisoned for having interpreted subsoil qualities differently from what was wanted in high places : ignorance of the natural wealth of the country, hence

sabotage, hence treason. . . . Others have been shot. Bacteriologists have been thrown into prison for obscure reasons. The most celebrated one died in a Leningrad prison hospital. But the further removed laboratory research is from social life and technique the more chances it has of being pursued without impediment and even with encouragement (grants, honours). All this still does not prevent the activity of the Secret Service. The subsidies generously allotted to the physiologist Pavlov for his researches into conditional reflexes did not prevent the arrest of his collaborators and friends. The encouragement given to the academician Yoffe for his researches into the structure of the atom did not prevent the deportation of his collaborators. The physicist Lazarev, after having been put in the very front rank of Soviet science, was imprisoned, deported, and then amnestied.*

Managed literature and science permit the organization of festivities at which solemnity is mingled with the mirth of banquets, with ordered ovations, and with ridiculous things that are at once amusing and saddening. The surgeons assembled in congress swear eternal devotion to the Leader. The gynaecologists declare that they want to draw their inspiration for ever from his teachings. The writers, whom he has called the "engineers of the soul", declaim litanies to him and adopt the canons of "socialistic realism", which is actually neither realist nor socialist, since it rests on the suppression of all freedom of opinion and expression.

What is to be said of intellectual intercourse with foreign lands? The postal censorship turns back pitilessly all the publications, all the books that do not emanate either from official communism or a sufficiently tame and moderate bourgeois spirit. *Le Temps* is the only French journal admitted into the U.S.S.R., together with *l'Humanité*. Too advanced reviews, like *Europe*, arrived up to recently only on

*The historian Tarlé suffered the same tribulations.

occasion. In certain libraries the foreign reviews are put at the disposal of the public after all the undesirable pages have been torn out. Works of authors who are friendly to the U.S.S.R., like André Malraux and Jean-Richard Bloch, are prohibited. Moreover, a foreign author is judged exclusively by his attitude towards the Stalinist régime. André Gide, practically unknown to the Russian public and stupidly treated as a corrupted and corrupting bourgeois, becomes overnight a great revolutionary writer, only because he made certain declarations. For having scrupulously clarified his thoughts since then, he is insulted by the entire Soviet Press. Foreign books enter with difficulty, not a bookshop offers them for sale ; the rare-books trade is subject to censorship.

When I was about to leave, an old doctor to whom I was saying my farewell begged me to send him the reviews of his speciality. "So many years gone by," he said, "and I haven't been able to keep abreast of anything." Suddenly he changed his mind : "No, don't send anything ; they would think that I have connections abroad, and you know how dangerous that is. . . ."

At every turn in domestic politics, all programmes and methods of education experience sudden transformations, not without resistance (usually simply inspired by good sense), which is broken down by administrative or police sanctions. Since 1935 there seems to be a desire to return to the old traditions. The students' committees have been suppressed, the directors restored, the discipline stiffened. The pupils will wear uniforms, as under the old régime. The organization of the Pioneers takes them in hand at an early stage in order to teach them the cult of the Leader, the goose-step with drums beating, the holding of meetings of approval or of protest, according to the rules.

A recent decision has instituted stabilized study manuals (up to now they changed virtually every

two years), and Stalin has intervened personally to condemn the overly stupid popularizations of history and the overly maladroit falsifications. In this way, there are no history manuals as yet. So far as I can judge, however, the school programmes appear to me to be much better than those of the primary schools of France and Belgium. Soviet primary-school education corresponds more to a central-school education in the West oriented towards technical studies. The programmes are more scientific. The conditions of the teachers, miserable until recently, were improved in 1936 ; a sustained effort is being made to clean and decorate the schools. It is not without results ; but school materials are lacking, copy-books are rare, the pupils often work with one book for three or four ; there is a still greater lack of educated instructors, and the perverse selection made in the pedagogical circles as a result of the repression only aggravates the evil. The school directors have to be appointed from among the party members. For want of communist pedagogues, the director is sometimes the most ignorant man in the school.

But the greatest evil is not the poverty of means and of men. It is the bureaucratic spirit that prevails in the schools and is translated into suspicion, informing, the repetition of formulae devoid of all content, the lessons of pure Stalinism crammed into children eight years old, the stifling of any critical spirit, the repression of all thought, and the hypocritical dissimulation to which the child accustoms himself out of necessity.

PART TWO
The System

I

THE SECRET SERVICE, CRIMES OF OPINION, INTERNAL PASSPORTS

THE traveller visiting a commune in the Middle Ages would have stopped to contemplate the belfry tower or the town hall, rising above the poor dwellings of the artisan and the bourgeois. The traveller visiting the cities of the U.S.S.R. today stops involuntarily, in Moscow, at the top of the Kuznetsky Most, the liveliest artery of the capital, to take in at a glance the latest architectural ensemble, the most imposing of the edifices of the G.P.U. . . . A building of fifteen storeys, huge co-operative stores, dwellings, and offices ; in the basement and at the rear of vast courts are perfectly silenced prisons ; and somewhere behind those façades of fine, polished stone, those shop fronts, those screened windows where the lamplight flares up in the evening, somewhere at the rear of a cellar lighted by neon lights, are the cleverly conceived execution rooms.

In Leningrad the new building of the G.P.U., built on the spot of a modest Palace of Justice that was burned in the March 1917 days, dominates the Neva by its tiered terraces and the Volodarsky Prospect by its granite columns. None of the old palaces of St. Petersburg can bear comparison with it. The same is true in all the centres of the U.S.S.R. The most imposing building is that of the G.P.U. And by a curiously preserved, old Asiatic custom, the cellars of the building usually serve as prisons. I was in those gaols in Moscow and in Samara (Kuybishev). In most of the towns there is a great animation in the neighbourhood of the G.P.U. : automobiles, motor-cycles,

carriages, mounted couriers, the coming and going of policemen escorting wretched convoys. Sentinels, their weapons held ready for action, survey the streets, preventing passers-by from stopping. At night projectors light up the façade, sentinels are on guard in the blinding light : symbols. Here they work twenty-four hours a day, more feverishly by night than by day. The secret operations, the raids, the arrests, the questionings, the executions—all begin towards ten in the evening and do not end until dawn.

Since 1934 the G.P.U.—State Political Administration—calls itself more frankly, in the Western manner, the Secret Service and is no longer anything but a department of the Commissariat of the Interior, or—its abbreviation in Russian—N.K.V.D. Far from reducing the influence of the political police, this reform has increased it by subordinating the most important ministry to it. The head of the G.P.U., named commissar-general, is the equal of a marshal ; the assistant commissars have the rank of generals commanding an army and, in point of fact, do command special troops. Decorated with all the Soviet orders, Yagoda shows himself by Stalin's side on all solemn occasions. He is at once a head of the Army, a great builder, a great policeman, a great, heavy-laden conscience, praised by Gorky and Romain Rolland.* Dependent upon the Commissariat are the Secret Service and its intelligence services abroad, the militia (or the police proper), the criminal investigation department, the internal passport department, public works employing penal labour, the road and highway maintenance service, the Black Cabinet, the concentration camps, the prisons, the "solitaries", deportation, the secret tribunal which is called the Special Conference. It is an omnipotent ministry of the police exercising a minute control of the entire population at every moment.

* He was replaced at the end of the Zinoviev trial by an obscure functionary named Yezhov.—TRANSLATOR.

Up to 1934 the G.P.U. applied the death penalty widely, pronounced by secret commissions upon the report of examining magistrates, without hearing the accused. Since the time of the Special Conference (*Osoboye, Sovestchaniye*, N.K.V.D.), it can no longer inflict penalties of more than five years of incarceration. It has at its disposal, therefore, deportation, the concentration camps, prisons, and the "solitaries". It sits in secret, its composition is secret, it decides the fate of the accused without having him appear before it, it admits no defence attorneys, it furnishes no explanation to the accused or to his relations, its decisions are practically irrevocable. During the entire duration of the penalty it exercises an absolute power over the condemned. In cases where the Secret Service deems the penalty of five years to be inadequate, the accused, since 1934, are turned over to the Special Colleges of the People's Tribunals and the Revolutionary Tribunals (*Osobaya Kolleghia Narssuda*, etc.).

The Special Colleges of the tribunals are composed of three judges appointed by the party committees. Sitting in judgment behind closed doors, they decide whether defence counsel is admitted or not. Up to now, so far as I know, they have never admitted it in political cases ; the accused is heard, the witnesses are cited, a formal procedure is strictly observed. The general opinion is that the verdicts pronounced by these tribunals are much more severe than the purely administrative verdicts of the Secret Service. Most frequently, they vary from five to ten years of internment in a concentration camp. Here are a few typical cases. A worker in charge of maintaining the reading-room of his factory goes to a store to get some placards. He laughingly refuses the portraits of Stalin and Kalinin that are to be seen everywhere. "I've enough of those heads, give me something else." He is arrested shortly thereafter, accused of throwing discredit upon the leaders of the party (counter-

revolutionary agitation), turned over to the special tribunal, six years of internment. . . .

Two couples are driving in a motor-car ; a tyre bursts. They have drunk a little, they are laughing. One of the men cries : "A bomb under Stalin's behind wouldn't have made a bigger explosion !" A falling-out between the women a few months later, and one of the group reports this remark. The two women and the guilty man are arrested, turned over to the tribunal under indictment of terroristic agitation, and sentenced to terms ranging between five and ten years of internment—the two women for having failed to report the remark. The Soviet law makes informing a duty, and failure in such a case is a crime punishable by the strongest penalties.

In a factory dining-room where sausage has been served for several successive days a worker asks banteringly if he is going to be made to "eat up the whole Budyenny cavalry". . . . Indicted for anti-Soviet agitation and sent to a concentration camp.

At Orenburg, on November 7, 1935, communist deportees, Stalinists for the most part—that is, those having adjured dissident opinions that they had once held or that were once imputed to them—come together to celebrate the October Revolution. The metal-worker Alexis Santalov, of Leningrad, an oppositionist who did not abjure—a very dangerous circumstance—flies into a passion and speaks of the "bureaucratic scoundrels". Denounced by a stool-pigeon present, he is condemned to five years of internment and is sent to the Karaganda concentration camp. The typographical worker Ivanov, of Leningrad, and his wife, having abjured, are each given only three years of the same penalty for having heard the remarks without reporting them the very next day.

The arrests usually take place at night, occasionally in the day-time, but by surprise, so as to pass off unperceived and to remain secret. Families have great

difficulty in finding the vanished person in prison ; they do not always succeed.

As a rule, no visit of relations is authorized during the investigation, which always takes place in absolute secrecy. The prisoners may be kept in a cell for months on end, without reading-matter of any kind, without the slightest contact with the outside, without walking round, without extra food. I underwent this regimen in Moscow for three months. The examination, using psychological terror, seeks thus to break them in order to extort confessions, the quality of which is of little importance but will serve to prop up a condemnation sought for in advance, to show the skill of the examining magistrate and to cover his responsibility in case of a check-up by the higher bodies of the party. The questionings take place at night, in order the better to play on the nerves of the accused. They sometimes begin with long conversations of which no minutes are kept. The minutes signed by the accused are generally written by the hand of the examining magistrate.

Only prisoners of note are given the benefit of an individual cell. In the large Butirky prison, in Moscow, rooms intended for a dozen persons hold as many as a hundred. The situation is worse in the provinces. A point is sometimes reached where small quarters are so filled up that the prisoners cannot sleep in them except in turn ; they pass the day standing up or on their haunches, one against the other, and institute among themselves a rotation according to which they succeed each other at the stinking tub or at the dormer window through which a breath of air may come. In every season the humidity of the sweat and the breath covers the walls. If you can conjure up the filth, the illness, the exhaustion from hunger, the despair prevailing in such a cell, you will have an idea of the routine of the prisoners. Numerous comrades, men and women whose names I could cite, spent months in these hells. It is needless to detail

the mortality rate among the prisoners under such conditions.

In a little prison of the Orenburg region in 1933–34 several hundred men died of undernourishment, of cold and misery ; the "plan of work" of the prison not having been executed, their food had been cut off. Most of the prisoners were peasants gaoled for infractions of the rules of *colkhozes* or bad application of the directives of the party.

A well-known saying in Russian revolutionary circles is "So long as the man is in your hands, there is always a way of framing him", or else : "So long as you have the neck, the rope will be found somewhere." To "frame" a person means to find formal pretexts, evidence (which may be false, it matters little), in interpretation of texts in such a way as permits an explanation of the sentence without putting into it in so many words : "Because of his convictions . . ." For the past two or three years no effort has been spared in framing persons. In a large number of cases men are in reality—and quite obviously—seized only for having been fighters for the revolution under the old régime or for having been socialists, anarchists, or oppositional communists many years ago. I shall cite names in sufficient number. The power, having no illusions as to their feelings towards it, considers that having once been revolutionists they might, in case of a social crisis, become revolutionists again ; and they try to suppress them.

Once in the toils of the Secret Service a person is well aware that he will never get out of them, or not for a dozen years, anyway. The revolutionists and the genuine nonconformists will never get out. The system comprises a series of successive measures, the duration of which is rarely less than ten years and the effect of which may be prolonged, theoretically, for a life-time.

A socialist or a left-wing communist has the

courage to acknowledge that he has great reservations as to the general line of the party. Not even that much is needed in the vast majority of cases. It is enough to have at one time professed opinions other than the official doctrine of the day, to be or to have been in relation with socialists or other oppositionists, to have received a letter, told a story. . . . Condemned to three years of "solitary", that is, to incarceration. At the expiration of his three years, if he has any amount of personal importance at all, if he belongs to the cadres, he is brought up to the bureau of the prison and learns that the G.P.U. has *added* two years to his term. . . . At the end of the five years he is not liberated, but sent into deportation for three years in some remote territory. At the expiration of the first three years of deportation, he goes through the routine called the "minus" or "except for" ; he is offered the possibility of choosing his new place of deportation out of a restricted list ; in theory, he can live anywhere in the U.S.S.R. *except for* the large cities, the frontier regions, the industrial regions, and others. At the expiration of these additional three years of deportation, if the Secret Service doesn't think it has to make another decision on his case, he may finally receive a passport as a free Soviet citizen. But this passport will bear a special notation of the Secret Service and from then on he will be forbidden to register his domicile in any of the large cities or in the industrial, maritime, or frontier regions. His position will be that of a man perpetually forbidden a sojourn.

For the real militants, that is for the men who have the courage to maintain their convictions—all political activity being impossible for them—things happen more simply ; on various pretexts, and even without pretext, they are merely moved about from prison to deportation and from deportation to prison.

The custom of internal passports does not exist, I believe, in any large civilized State. Not even the fascist States have thought that they could rob their

nationals of their freedom to move about in the country and to change residence. The *Small Soviet Encyclopaedia*, published by the State publishers, says in its edition of 1930 that "the custom of internal passports, instituted by the autocracy as an instrument of police oppression of the toiling masses, was suppressed by the October Revolution". It was re-established and terribly aggravated in 1932. The passports are delivered by special commissions in which the Secret Service has a preponderant voice. These commissions apply secret instructions so that no law, no known regulation, guides their operations. Nobody knows if he will receive his passport. The refusal of a passport means that you must leave your place of residence within ten days and proceed to a locality 65 or 101 kilometres from a large city, as the case may be. There, moreover, you may also be refused a passport.

Deportations resulting from the refusal of a passport have taken place and continue to occur en masse, tearing apart families, mercilessly breaking up lives—without explanation or appeal. Children have been seen separated from their parents, women snatched from their husbands, fathers torn from their families. At the beginning, the administrative excesses were such in Moscow that an epidemic of suicides resulted and—according to the public rumour, for nothing exact is ever known—Stalin had to intervene to put on the brakes. In so far as these things are talked about aloud, the passport is supposed to be refused in the large centres to former nobles, former capitalists, former military men, *former political prisoners*, those suspected of opposition, and to certain categories of condemned common criminals ; it may be refused for loose morals, for homosexuality ; and so indeed it is, without explanation, in the most revolting cases.

I knew the following cases : a student was expelled from Moscow because her father—himself authorized to reside in Moscow in his capacity as specialist—had once been a capitalist. In reality, this young woman

inclined to the anarchists, was known for "having ideas". . . . In Leningrad I saw the wife of a communist expelled from the city because in 1918 she had been married to an officer ; this occurred in 1933 and the woman had a child by her second husband. . . . My parents-in-law were refused passports in Leningrad in 1933 because they were the parents-in-law of an oppositional communist, himself imprisoned for this reason alone. The person involved was the old worker Russakov, who had at that time more than forty years of labour behind him.

Passports are always refused to the families of those shot or of condemned men who have been given long terms. These families are deported, as a rule. (Several wives of the young communists of Leningrad who were shot in 1934 have been sent to concentration camps.)

The possession of a normal passport, without a special notation by the Secret Service, gives the Soviet citizen the right to reside in only one locality. Everywhere else he may be refused registration ; and he is refused. In other words, he has lost the right to move. A worker living in a small town cannot get registered in a large centre save upon the request of his employers and only for the duration of his work. A worker of Cheliabinsk who wants to live awhile in Moscow, if only to shake off a little of the oppressive provincial unculturedness, has no possibility open to her except marriage with a Muscovite.

The passport is visaed at the place of work. With each change of employment, the reason for the change is entered into the passport. I have known of workers discharged for not having come on the day of rest to contribute a "voluntary" (and, naturally, gratuitous) day of work, in whose passports is written : "Discharged for sabotage of the production plan."

II

PENITENTIARIES, "SOLITARIES", DEPORTATION, RIGHT OF ASYLUM

THE Penitentiaries.—The concentration camps occupy entire regions. The S.L.O.N. (*Solovietsky Lager Osobovo Naznachenya,* Special Camp of Solovietsky) includes the whole littoral of the White Sea, the Solovietsky Islands, the Kola peninsula, the town of Kem. It is an entire, vast northern country with model establishments of which a propaganda film has been made and with filthy corners from which there is rarely a return. The penal labourers of the concentration camps exploit the appatite beds of Khibinogorsk (now Kirovsk) in the extreme North, the mines, the plantations, the new enterprises of Karaganda in Central Asia, the lumber industries in the north of Russia and of Siberia. They are employed throughout the U.S.S.R. in the construction of certain edifices (buildings of the Secret Service, prisons, etc.), in the digging of the Moscow-Volga canal, in the construction of the Leningrad-Moscow highway, in military-strategic works. It is absolutely impossible to know all their assignments.

There are secret camps. A few years ago there was one greatly dreaded, on an island of the Caspian. A large camp exists at the mouth of the Pechora, within the Arctic Circle. Solovky, Karaganda, Oost-Pechorsk, and Mariisk are the best known. To my knowledge—casual and very fragmentary—many students have been sent to the Karaganda mines. But without doubt there are many of them in all the penitentiaries. Many Leningrad specialists were sent to Oost-Pechorsk

after the Kirov affair (1934). As to the treatment inflicted upon the youth of the schools, the following fact was brought to my attention. A student of Ivanovo-Voznessensk, called upon to lecture on the end of the French Revolution, was accused of having made political allusions in the course of it when he spoke of the Thermidor. He spent several months in prison, in an over-crowded room, amidst squalor, hunger, illness, fear, oblivion ; in the end his good faith was recognized and he was liberated. A few days later there was a meeting of the schools. He took the floor, following some fine speeches, and from the tribune told the story of what had happened to him. He was arrested the very same evening, indicted on the basis of Article 58 for counter-revolutionary agitation, and sent to Karaganda for ten years.

The routine in these penitentiaries has infinite variations. Its gradations run from the model establishment and semi-freedom to the most miserable conditions, to physical decay, to terror, to sadistically inflicted torture. It is no secret to anybody that a certain number of camp chiefs are shot every year for having conducted themselves criminally towards the interned. What cannot happen in a detachment of condemned men lost in the Siberian brush, including bandits, desperate or exasperated peasants, stool-pigeons ready for anything, intellectuals and technicians, harshly treated politicals, all of them bound to a hard task, badly fed, and submitted to the absolute power of a policeman who is himself a condemned man?

The condemned are tied down to their work. The emulation—which we dare not call socialist out of respect for socialism—of the shock brigades, Stakhanovism, makes it possible to squeeze out of these labourers a maximum return guaranteed by the existence of Reinforced Companies of the Régime (R.U.R., *Rota Oosilennovo Regima*), where those who try to resist go to perish. Political prisoners, socialists,

anarchists, and communists, the latter mainly Trotskyists or suspected of Trotskyism, sent to the concentration camps by the thousands, especially since 1934, carry on endless struggles there, in order to defend their dignity and a derisive minimum of political rights, by refusing to work, by hunger strikes, by suicide. (A few years ago five members of the Central Committee of the Turkish Nationalist Party of the Caucasus, the "Moosavat", who demanded in the Solovietsky Islands that they be recognized as political prisoners and be transferred to the "solitaries", let themselves die of hunger.)

The Prisons.—Most of the prisons of the old régime are still used, and overcrowding is the rule within them. New model prisons are built in various places. The routine of the political prisons that are called "solitaries" varies according to the locality. In general it is endurable, with the reservations that I shall indicate. There are "solitaries" in Suzdal (the former monastery, a prison of the old régime), in Yaraslav, in Cheliabinsk, in Tobolsk, in Verkhne-Uralsk. The one in Yaroslav used to be—and may well yet be—reserved in part for foreigners and for politicals subjected to isolation. It is surely not the only one. The condemned live there in common, grouped in rooms. Walks twice a day, in groups. Food of inferior quality, based on oatmeal pastes, millet, etc., but fairly adequate. The smallest rights of the prisoners are the object of constant struggles with the administration, struggles which lead periodically to acts of savagery, hunger strikes, scenes of all sorts. The singing of the "International" on May 1 provoked terrible conflicts on several occasions, the prisoners having replied to the cruelties by big hunger strikes and by revolts.

There have been hunger strikes against the automatic doubling of sentences. Sentinels have fired into cell windows. The administration has drenched the prisoners with icy water in their cells, and has forcibly fed hunger strikers whose death was feared. All these

things have been witnessed. . . . A hunger strike of 450 Trotskyists in Verkhne-Uralsk lasted eighteen days in 1931. The one in December 1934 was shorter, but was marked by the secret kidnapping of the strike committee (Dingelstedt, Byk, Krassinsky, Slitinsky), who were sent to the Solovietsky Islands. Our Trotskyist comrade A. Tarov, who escaped at the end of 1935 from a place of deportation and crossed the frontier, writes :

On January 22, 1931, the anniversary of Lenin's death, all the deported Bolshevik-Leninists of Akmolinsk [Kazakstan] were arrested and incarcerated in cells infected with typhoid. There were twelve of us, including two women ; nine contracted typhoid. In the Petropavlovsk prison we found four oppositional communist workers. . . .

In the Verkhne-Uralsk prison the Bolshevik Leninists, to the number of 450, began a hunger strike to protest against the despotism of the local administration. The year before, in the course of a hunger strike, the director Biziukov gave the order to douse our comrades with cold water—this in winter and in Siberia ! The order was executed. When our comrades began to barricade the cells, the gaolers directed the water hose into their eyes. Our comrade Pogossian lost his sight. In 1931, a turnkey fired a shot through a grille into the chest of comrade Essayan. On the days of revolutionary festivals, we had serious conflicts with the administration. We were either incarcerated or beaten up because we sang the "International".

In the Petropavlovsk prison I saw 35 women, eight of them with nursing babies, shut up in a cell of 25 square metres. The only access to air was through the peephole. I shall never forget those piteous and puny children ! Taking turns, the mothers held them up to the peephole so that they might breathe a wretched ration of fresh air. . . .

We began our hunger strike [in Verkhne-Uralsk, against the automatic doubling of sentences] on December 11, 1933. On the 20th, the hunger strikers were dragged from cell to cell because of a raid. They began to feed us forcibly. Unspeakable violence was the result, the voluntarily famished men battling with the gaolers. Our comrades, of course, were trounced. At the end of our strength, they crammed rubber hose down our mouths and throats. The famished men were dragged to the "feeding cell" like so many dogs. Nobody gave in. On the fifteenth day we decided to suspend the strike because the attempts at suicide were becoming too numerous. . . .

The G.P.U. promised not to double the sentences any more. More than 130 comrades had participated in the strike. The strike committee was sent off to the Solovietsky Islands, but without an increase in sentence

—an arresting sequel to this story : for the prisons of the monasteries of Solovietsky and of Suzdal were reserved for many centuries for heretics and for grand dignitaries who had fallen into disgrace.

The prisoners are entirely cut off from the world. From time to time they may, upon individual authorization, receive visits from their relatives, but the great distances make this a rather theoretical right. They may exchange six letters a month with their relatives (receive two and write four, or any other arrangement of this sort), the letters, of course, being censored, and many of them being lost either at the point of arrival or of departure. *All their intellectual works are confiscated when they leave.* In this connection it may be recalled that under the old régime Chernychevsky was able to write his great novel *What to Do?* in the Petropavlovsk fortress, where Kropotkin was also authorized to continue his works on geography. . . . The Chernychevskys and the Kropotkins of today are beaten down to their very minds. Nothing they think about reaches the world of life outside. Their works are classified by the Secret Service in its archives. When they come out of there, the world will see with stupefaction the portion of the intellectual production of an epoch that was thus choked off. . . .

The Butirky prison, famous in the last years of the autocracy, is a city within a city in Moscow. It includes secret quarters : for any number of years now it has not been known who is there. Recently, according to a good deal of tallying evidence that I was able to assemble, there was within it a fairly large number of foreigners : Germans, Poles, Italians, a Spanish anarchist, a Viennese *Schutzbund* man, and numerous Russian railway men who returned from Manchuria after the sale to Japan of the Chinese Eastern Railway.

Because the political prisoners often resort to the hunger strike, a special quarter has been reserved for these strikers. As soon as he has signified his decision, the striker is transferred to a special cell where his clothing is taken from him to be replaced by a prisoner's uniform ; he gets a pretty scanty pallet, precious little food, and he is deprived of reading-matter. . . . He is abandoned to himself, and the authorities wait until exhaustion has begun its work to convince him of the futility of resistance. Nothing of these struggles is known on the outside and most of the prison itself is unaware of them.

For more than ten years the political prisons have been under the personal control of two high functionaries of the G.P.U. who are known for their strictness, the citizeness Andreyeva and her deputy Dukis.

Deportation.—One may be deported to a fairly large town like Tashkent, Kazan, Saratov, and find moderately good employment there, but this treatment is reserved, in general, for Stalinist deportees of note (very numerous at the moment), and to socialists who are well known abroad. Most of the deportees are subject to compulsory residence in localities without industry, sometimes in unhealthy villages or hamlets, or those known for their rigorous climate. Northern Russia and Northern Siberia, Central Asia, the desert regions of Kazakstan are the best-known places of deportation. The number of political deportees must reach several tens of thousands.

The deportee cannot get any work without the specific consent of the Secret Service. If he is a worker, he will not be tolerated in a factory or a shop. If he is an intellectual, he will not be allowed to teach or to continue his studies. The so-called responsible employments, the only ones that are fairly adequately paid, are forbidden him. He is deprived of civil rights. His correspondence, closely supervised by the Black Cabinet, is often confiscated. He cannot have any

kind of systematic relations with party members and, generally speaking, he is not welcomed into the local population, which rightly fears to compromise itself. He is often raided, often arrested without explanation. In a word, he lives under the permanent threat of the Secret Service, against which he has no defence whatever. At Arkhangelsk, Yenisseisk, Minussinsk, in the Narim region, in Astrakhan, in Orenburg, in Semipalatinsk, etc., half the deportees are doomed to unemployment. The Secret Service, recognizing that it is materially impossible for them to find work under the conditions in which it puts them, grants them a dole that ranges from 30 to 75 roubles per month (1 kilogramme of brown bread, remember, costs 1 rouble; a corner in somebody's home comes to 30 roubles).

The deportees are doomed, for the most part, to destitution and, by virtue of a surveillance that goes on every minute, in which stool-pigeons and provocation play the biggest part, to a truly tragic moral condition. Their private life is shattered. Three or four times a year they will be shifted administratively from one region to another, for no known reason, apparently in order to wear down their nerves. The transfers take place in convoys, in prisoners' coaches, together with common criminals. They travel for months from prison to prison. They are often arrested and sent to concentration camps without being able to find out why. The testimony of Dr. Anton Ciliga, a Yugoslavian communist who recently left the U.S.S.R. after long struggles in the prisons, says: "During the summer of 1935 almost all the Bolshevik-Leninists deported to Central Asia, to Samarkand, Chimkent, Alma-Ata, Akmolinsk, Aktiubinsk, Pavlodar, were sent to concentration camps for five years." The year before, all the deportees of Semipalatinsk, about 30, were imprisoned. In January 1936 all the Trotskyists deported to Tara (Siberia) were arrested. In 1935 almost all the socialist deportees of Ulianovsk and Kazan were arrested and subjected to new

sentences because some of them had approved, in private letters, the formation of the United Front in France.

Deportees live alone or in small groups in the villages of the North, far from any civilization, far from the railways, devoured in the summer by mosquitoes, under orders not to move about for more than 500 metres from their home.

With the exception of some *kulaks*,* representatives of the possessing classes are no longer to be found in the concentration camps and other places of captivity. The repression strikes with all its weight upon Soviet workers of various origins, nine times out of ten quite arbitrarily taxed with counter-revolution.

In the prisons, the concentration camps, etc., one finds the believers of various sects; priests, technicians, and intellectuals accused of sabotage; suspects—in large numbers—suspects solely because of their socialist origins or of their remote post; noblemen and sons of noblemen, former tradesmen, former military men or their descendants, persons having relatives abroad even if not in emigration, persons of German or Polish origin. . . . One finds mystics, occultists, Masons. From the political standpoint, all the parties are represented—these are the only places where they are even represented—Jewish (Zionist), Armenian, Georgian, Turkish, and Mongol nationalists, social revolutionaries, social democrats, non-party socialists, anarchists, syndicalists, oppositional communists of whom the Trotskyists are the majority, suspect Stalinist communists, the latter being exceedingly numerous. The present party-purging, carried on by a checking-up of every membership card and of the personal dossier of each member, means the expulsion, according to the figures published by the official Press, of from 10 to 14 per cent of the party membership. The expelled are immediately arrested and accused under Article 168 of the penal code (fraud and swindling) of

* Wealthy peasants.

having abused the confidence of the party by concealing from it something about their past or their social origins. From 150,000 to 200,000 communists, foreign to any opposition in reality, are thus being confined to the prisons or the penitentiaries at the present moment.

What can be the magnitude of the repression? I shall not speak here of the deportation en masse of several millions of well-to-do or reputedly well-to-do peasants for the requirements of the cause; nor of the technicians, workers, and functionaries condemned in connection with the poor execution of the Five-Year Plans and the collectivization plans, who number several tens of thousands (the functionaries sentenced during the collectivization have recently been amnestied, together with certain categories of peasants), nor of the Leningrad deportees, who likewise number several tens of thousands. I have mentioned the 150,000 or 200,000 communists of the purge now taking place (Article 168). Thousands of communists of Leningrad, of the Zinoviev tendency, were sentenced in 1935. I think that the national parties must have several thousand representatives in the penitentiaries; the socialists and the anarchists, several hundred men each, a few thousands altogether. The oppositional communists, Trotskyists mainly, counted from 3000 to 4000 outlaws towards the end of 1929; there now remain a few hundred—hardly more than 500, it seems to me. The suspected Stalinist communists, among whom are many accused of "Trotskyism", must run into the thousands, even tens of thousands.

Upon my arrival in Orenburg in 1933, the little town numbered some 15 political deportees, anarchists, socialists, and communists. Upon my departure, in April 1936, the town had from 150 to 200, of whom a maximum of 30 really had anarchist, socialist, or Trotskyist convictions. There were a dozen Trotskyists and perhaps half a hundred suspects of

Trotskyism. There were, in addition, about a thousand deportees from Leningrad. One can see from this monographic view the crescendo of the repression in 1935–36.

It is proper to throw some light here on the application of the right of asylum in the U.S.S.R. The foreign political refugees who arrive in the U.S.S.R. without passing through the channels of the International Red Aid (International Labour Defence) are generally imprisoned upon their arrival as espionage suspects.

A large number of foreign communists are imprisoned under diverse pretexts, administratively tried, and sentenced in secrecy. The Hungarians, the Rumanians, the Poles, the Germans, are particularly numerous in the Solovietsky Islands. Dr. Anton Ciliga recently made known the deportation of a score of Yugoslavian oppositional communists. Many Italian anarchists and communists are at present deported (Gaggi, Merino, Calligaris). Bulgarian communist militants are likewise to be found in the prisons and places of deportation. The illegal parties, whose members could in no case resort to consular protection, are the principal sufferers from these police persecutions. A group of Polish communist refugees, including a former deputy of the Warsaw Diet, were recently shot in the U.S.S.R. upon the charge of espionage, after an absolutely secret trial. This fact was made public by the *Bulletin* of the Russian Communist Opposition (published in Paris) in its April 4, 1936, number.

For several years now, Italian refugees living in the U.S.S.R. have been granted authorization to leave the country only if they agreed to be repatriated through Odessa, that is, turned over to the fascists. The anarchist Petrini went through there in 1935, after many years of internment and deportation.

It is quite possible that the new Soviet constitution will mitigate a state of affairs that has become a

danger to the régime and one that can *neither be acknowledged nor justified* in the eyes of international opinion. The abundance of labour in the penitentiaries certainly does not compensate for the injury done to production by the brutal elimination of a high percentage of skilled workers. The digging of canals of strategical importance does not compensate for the effects of the mass discontentment with the State power. The abuse of the terror exercised against the toiling classes is a boomerang against the régime and threatens to be rather costly to it one of these days. The Government is not so blind as not to want to ward off these dangers. But it is likewise certain that in spite of the relaxation produced in the interior by the stabilization of the rouble, the Government's unpopularity among the thinking elements of the population is too profound for it to be able to show itself really liberal. At all events, the bureaucratic machine will endeavour to reduce to naught or to pure formality the legal measures that might give back to the citizens a modicum of security.

Nothing would be easier at the present moment than to abolish deportation and replace it profitably with certain applications of the passport custom. Nine-tenths of the political prisoners could be ostentatiously amnestied, and it would be enough to keep *one-tenth* of them in the prisons—the 10 per cent of real oppositionists—for all the shades of socialist and communist opinion to remain stifled. Having become by far too odious, the administrative sanctions may be abrogated and replaced by the activity of the tribunals—which are, moreover, entirely administrative—meeting behind closed doors, admitting no defence counsel, and consequently offering no guarantee whatsoever to the accused.

III

THE FATE OF THE SOCIALISTS—THE FATE OF THE ANARCHISTS

IN order to be complete, it would be necessary to devote a volume to this chapter alone, as well as to the two or three that follow, and no volume could be sadder. All the representatives of all the shades of revolutionary opinion, without exception, are prisoners or deportees. All have behind them long years of persecution. I know them well enough to know that they all consider themselves doomed to perpetual persecution. A socialist deportee told me with a bitter smile, at the moment of the negotiations on the United Front between the socialist and communist Internationals : "Our comrades in the West don't really give a damn about us. You will see that if it is to their interests, they won't hesitate to let us be trampled in the dust. . . ." I do not take upon myself the responsibility for these remarks ; I report them as the index of a state of mind. They came back to me when I was able to observe the complete silence that gripped the socialist Press of France and of Belgium with regard to the anti-labour repression in the U.S.S.R.

Of the Social Revolutionaries, Abraham Gotz is deported to Central Asia, under what are said to be tolerable conditions. At Orenburg I saw Leo Gerstein die, a member of the Central Committee, an old idealist of the left wing of the party. His term of deportation was regularly renewed every three years. Gravely ill, he worked up to his last days in a Soviet bank. Finding it impossible to cure himself in Orenburg, he had asked for authorization to go to the

Kazan hospital, and he received it on the morning of the day he died. So it cannot be said that it was refused him ! I learned in 1934 of the death of the son of the former president of the Constituent Assembly, Boris Chernov. Imprisoned for many years, primarily because of his name, he ended by being deported to Central Asia, where a tropical fever soon carried him off. He was a trained agronomist, a convinced socialist, and a fine character, whose cell-mates often spoke of him to me with a good deal of emotion. I do not know where Timofeyev and Donskoy are ; not at liberty, that is certain.

An old Social Revolutionary militant, Volkenstein, former collaborator of the Soviet Military Academy, hence one who had joined up some time ago, was subjected for years to absolute isolation in the secret prison of Yaroslav, where she practically lost her speech. She is now in Verkhne-Uralsk prison.

Of the social democrats, in Orenburg I met George Kuchin, deported for the third or fourth time. He gave the socialist régime its just due, but, attached to workers' democracy, he had declared himself in his private correspondence a partisan of "silent opposition". An Estonian political refugee, Sommer, came to us after leaving prison. He was arrested at the beginning of 1936, for some imprudent remarks, and he must now be in a concentration camp. I also saw at great intervals a Muscovite socialist comrade, Goldenberg, and a solid old Georgian, Ramishvili, whom privations had not succeeded in finishing.

Eva Broido, an old socialist militant, came illegally to Russia in 1927, was speedily arrested, naturally, spent three years of imprisonment in Suzdal, and was then deported for five years to Tashkent. At the expiration of this term, in 1935, she was again deported for five years, but this time to Ulala, that is, to a village of the Oyrat territory, 77 kilometres from the nearest railway station. This courageous woman went through a term of hard labour under the old régime.

Braunstein, who was sent to Russia by his party in 1927–28, spent years in the Suzdal prison. I do not know his whereabouts today. Lieber and Zederbaum (the brother of Martov), other old Mensheviks, were deported in 1934 to the Volga region, in Kazan and Ulianovsk. After the Kirov affair they were imprisoned and again deported to more remote places. Many socialists were sentenced for having declared themselves, in a message to *l'Humanité* and *Le Populaire*, partisans of the People's Front in France, or for having discussed it among themselves.

What has become of old Bazarov, who in 1930 flatly refused to lend himself to the monstrous comedy of the famous trial of the alleged Mensheviks of Moscow? (They declared that they had prepared, under the direction of the Socialist International, a foreign intervention against the U.S.S.R. in agreement with the French General Staff !) They did not dare to try either Bazarov or Cherevanin, another veteran of Russian socialism whose attitude was similar, so the former was sent to a concentration camp for ten years and the latter was deported. Former collaborators of Gorky in the *Novaya Zhizn** of 1917–18, the historian Sukhanov, who gave us several volumes of memoirs of unique interest concerning the early days of the revolution, the economists Groman, Finn-Yenotayevsky, Ginsburg, Sher, old socialists who had long ago rallied to the Government, influential functionaries of the Planning Commissions, falsely accused themselves of everything that was wanted of them and were condemned to ten years of imprisonment, not without having risked their necks. (Gorky did not flinch.) Ikov, an authentic member of the Social Democratic Party—the only one in the whole affair—was sentenced together with them. A reputable young scholar, Rubin, absurdly accused his master and protector, Riazanov, of having concealed the "directives of the Second International on the intervention".

* *New Age.*

The truth seems to be much more simple : Riazanov raised vehement protests among the ruling circles against the concocting of this trial. All the more embarrassing because he was irreproachable, he disappeared.

In order the better to show what kind of men are being eliminated in this way, I dwell for a moment on his biography. Arrested in 1891, young Riazanov, who is one of the earliest Russian Marxists, spent five years in prison. In the revolution of 1905 he became one of the first organizers of the Russian trade unions. Later he was founder of the Communist Academy, founder and guiding spirit of the Marx-Engles Institute, one of the rare scientific institutions of Moscow that honestly measured up to the requirements of its task. . . . He was first deported to Saratov. What have they done to this scholar who belongs to the international proletariat ?

In the Verkhne-Uralsk "solitary", the condemned of this trial were boycotted by the communists as traitors and by the socialists as impostors. I do not know what became of them, but they have not regained their freedom. They know too many things and they were made the actors of too revolting a comedy for it to be possible to grant them their freedom. Sukhanov demanded it in 1934, by means of long hunger strikes, at the end of which he was removed from the prison.

Vladimir Skazin, having gone through the Soviet prisons, assembled an impressive documentation on the anti-labour repression, tried to send it abroad by approaching a Scandinavian socialist on an official mission in Moscow. He addressed to the Soviet Congress in 1934 a written protest, impressively motivated, at the end of which he declared that he renounced his Soviet nationality as incompatible with a socialist conviction, and demanded the possibility of emigrating. He himself went to give this document to the Secretariat of the congress, where he was arrested.

A secret tribunal sentenced him to capital punishment for high treason. He spent two months in a death cell, waiting for his brains to be shot out. When he was apprised that his penalty had been commuted to ten years of forced labour, he summoned the Government to have the courage of a more complete crime. He refused to go digging up the ground in some Northern waste, carried on a long hunger strike, and succeeded in having himself sent to a "solitary".

What has become of the left-wing social revolutionaries who collaborated vigorously in the October Revolution, giving it such energetic fighters as Sablin and Kivkidze, and who then formed a turbulent opposition in the Soviet republic which perished in 1918 by its own mistakes? Maria Spiridonova, terrorist, hard-labour prisoner, martyred by the gendarmes under the old régime, leader of the party until its defeat; Irina Kakhovskaya, terrorist and hard-labour prisoner under the autocracy, she who, under the occupation of the Ukraine, also organized terroristic attacks upon the heads of the German General Staff and escaped the rack only by a miracle—all of them, together with Kamkov, Mayorov, Trutovsky, have not recovered their freedom since 1920–21.

Fate of the anarchists:

Nicolas Rogdayev, after having gone through three revolutions as a combatant, from 1905 to 1917, died in deportation in Tashkent in 1932, in the same Turkestan which he helped to Sovietize. Alexis Borovoy, professor of the University of Moscow, deported in 1929 for having corresponded with friends abroad, had his penalty prolonged in 1932 by three years by administrative measure. He died in Vologda, 1936.

Aaron Baron left prison in 1920, for a few hours, and I heard him shoot out his fiery words over Kropotkin's grave, not yet filled with earth. I had the impression, at one and the same time, of a redoubtable foe and yet of a great comrade. Since that time he

has been in the prisons of Moscow, Orel, Kharkov, Yenisseisk ; in the concentration camps of Pertominsk, and of the Solovietsky Islands ; deported to Byisk, in the Altai, to Korosino, in the tundras of the Siberian North, to Tashkent, to Voronezh, a mild zone ; then he disappeared, arrested once more. Where is he ? His life is hard and his ideas are firmly fixed in his soul. Why was there not applied to him the decision of banishment abroad that had been adopted against him in 1922 ? It is true that he did fight the Reds in the Ukraine in the name of the free communes, in the chaos of the civil war. But the Blacks of that epoch fought the Whites still harder and they amounted to something in the débâcles of Denikin and Wrangel. And hasn't the civil war been finished for over fifteen years now ?*

Vladimir Barmash, arrested in 1929, served in the prisons of Suzdal and Butirky ; ill, he was deported to Yenisseisk and finally again imprisoned in Verkhne-Uralsk. He has a proud and tough rebel's character that they will not succeed in breaking.

Also in the Verkhne-Uralsk prison is Gerassimchik, the indefatigable editor of *The Voice of Labour* (*Golos Truda*), the syndicalist organ from the first years of the revolution, very much for the Soviets at various times.

In Orenburg I met Albert Inaun, a solid Georgian who could say with his fine, prepossessing smile : "In ten years I have passed through all the concentration camps of a sixth of the world, or pretty near all of them." When I left, his morale was perfect, but his lungs seemed to be finished.† Khudolay and Askarov, the latter once the theoretician of universalist anarchism who came over to the dictatorship of the

* An *agent provocateur* of the Cheka had his wife, Fanny Baron, and the theoretician, Leo Chorny, shot in 1922.

† Met in the same town : Pavel Sokolov, building-painter of Leningrad ; Alexander Smoliukov, Alexandra Andina, and Kornilov, all three of whom had settled there in spite of themselves after many years of tribulations, being unable to go anywhere with their passports as persecuted persons.

proletariat, are in prison or deported. How are we to know the fate of those men whom the Secret Service has covertly scattered in the prisons, the penitentiaries, the filthy corners of the vast country? What has become of Kolabuskhin, who rendered such great services in foodstuffs-provisioning during the civil war? Where are Maria Vegger, Ivan Tarasuk-Kabass (arrested in 1920 in Kharkov and sent from one concentration camp to another, from Kholmogori to Pertominsk, imprisoned in Briansk and in Petropavlovsk, then in Kazakstan, then deported to Tashkent), Nicolas Tumanov, Shkolnikov, Nicolas Bielayev? I name only the known militants, the prominent ones.

Before me lies a list of a hundred anarchists and syndicalists drawn up in 1934. It is quite incomplete and we know that the Stalinist reaction raged systematically in 1935 in a manner calculated to purge the whole country of the slightest leaven of nonconformity. On that occasion they even recalled old anarchists who had ceased activity for years back and inflicted implacable penalties on them. Herman Sandomirsky —former terrorist, condemned to death, escaped from the Warsaw fortress, hard-labour prisoner; since the revolution, director of the Balkans Division of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, member of the Soviet Writers' Union, author of interesting memoirs and useful monographs on Italian fascism—was deported to Yenisseisk for five years without any known or imaginable reason. Novomirsky—terrorist, hard-labour prisoner, fugitive under the old régime, came over to the party under the personal influence of Lenin in 1919, but left it at the beginning of the N.E.P., initiator of the first Soviet encyclopaedia—was sent to a penitentiary for ten years. His wife was given five years of the same penalty.

Sometimes foreign refugees, hounded by fascism in their own country, only succeed in changing prisons upon arrival in the U.S.S.R. I learn, while

writing this, that the wife of Erich Mühsam, the fine militant of the Bavarian Soviets in 1918, the prisoner (for eight years !), the anarchist poet assassinated recently in a German concentration camp—I learn that his wife, Zeinl Mühsam, has been imprisoned for several months in Moscow. . . . From Yaransk, where he was dying of hunger, Otello Gaggi has just been transferred to a hamlet in Kazakstan. Gaggi—a Tuscanese worker, condemned by the Arezzo Court of Assizes to 25 years' imprisonment for having valiantly defended his village of San Giovanni di Valdarno against the Blackshirts in 1921, a fugitive to Moscow with his wife and little girl—is one of a number of anarchists* arrested after the Kirov affair. His wife has also been deported, but separately. What has become of their child ?

One sees, for example, socialists and anarchists whom not the services they have rendered, their courage in adversity, their firmness of conviction, their age as veterans, their scientific merit, their withdrawal into private life, their personal misfortunes, the great name of men who had sacrificed, the persecutions suffered elsewhere, nor the courage displayed in the international struggles—whom none of these considerations insured against a repression which drives cruelty to the point of absurdity. For it is certain that Gaggi and Zeinl Mühsam, known abroad, are more dangerous to the régime while in prison than at large in Moscow ; as things are, people reflect more deeply. Nothing counts save an obscure reason of State, the enemy of all genuine reason. The simplest common sense would dictate a different treatment of the representatives of revolutionary generations who had survived so many battles.

* Gustave Bouley, French ex-anarchist, arrived in Russia in 1920, after having participated in the disturbances in Germany. He was a visionary who wanted nothing more than to live in peace, and he ended by settling in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, where he was an esteemed collaborator for more than ten years. From there, he went over to the editorship of the *Journal de Moscou*. Mysteriously arrested in 1935 and condemned to five years in a concentration camp. Sent to Kamchatka.

We shall see this even better in connection with the communist opposition.

It is true that the social revolutionaries* were the irreconcilable opponents of the October Revolution ; that they supported the counter-revolution, encouraged the Czechoslovakian intervention in 1918, formed governments in Samara and Ufa, killed Volodarsky, planned the assassination of Trotsky, wounded Lenin, belonged to the Omsk Directorate that bore Admiral Kolchak to power. But the Third Republic amnestied the Communards in 1879, eight years after the battle of the barricades. Is it fitting that a socialist régime should show itself more vindictive towards completely vanquished adversaries of whom so many —and that is very well known—had in reality come over to it some time ago ? And if they are still deemed too dangerous, if they are still feared, would it not be simpler to banish them than to inflict upon them perpetual captivity ?

With respect to the social democrats (Mensheviks), the left-wing social revolutionaries, and the anarchists, the matter stands differently. The first experienced many hesitations during the revolution and committed not a few mistakes. Their conception, which had matured over a period of twenty years, was fundamentally hostile to the seizure of power ; and thinking that the "experiment" that was taking place was doomed to failure, they prepared the failure. However, they did clearly pronounce themselves, and in time, for the defence of the soviets, not without severely criticizing the Government at home, which was strictly within their rights. The legend which makes them accomplices of the foreign intervention rests upon miserable confusions or is only an imposture. They took their place, together with the left-wing social revolutionaries, the Maximalists, and the anarchists,

* The name "social revolutionaries" creates a big misunderstanding. In reality they formed a peasant party led by radical intellectuals who were supporters of a bourgeois republic.

among the dissidents of the revolution. The difference —extremely serious because it relates to the philosophy of action, labour's strategy, tactics; in a word, to socialism in all its aspects—which separates them from the Bolsheviks is about the same as that which separated for so long a time the socialist left in the West from the communists.

And here is a vital problem. Every revolution will have its dissidents, its minorities, all the more annoying at certain hours because they will be more attached to the social transformation. Every revolution will have to deal with a proletariat that is divided or that bears the mark of its old divisions. One will see minorities become majorities and dissidence changing camps. The Bolsheviks did not in general commit the mistake, despite the sharpness of the sometimes bloody struggles, of confounding the dissidents with the counter-revolutionists; exaggerations of this sort became increasingly frequent in proportion to the bureaucratization of the régime, and finished by constituting a system. If it is true that dissidence and differences of opinion can, in time of revolution, play the game of the enemy, it is just as true to state that the errors of the leaders and of the majorities play the game of the enemy to no lesser degree. On both sides it is a facile argument, double edged, which contains its part of the dialectical truth, but which it is always a mistake to abuse. For the absence of a thoroughly alive critical thought also plays the game of the enemy!

In Russia the civil war and the encirclement created an atmosphere of mortal peril in which were dictated measures of public safety, sometimes terrible ones, but no less terrible for the party in power (*alone* in power because of the defection of certain dissidents) than for its adversaries in the ranks of the revolution. If the dictatorship of the proletariat refused the Mensheviks and the anarchists the right to sabotage, even with the best intentions, the defence of a commune threatened at every moment with the worst

fate, it showed itself no less severe towards the deficiencies of the members, of the Communist Party. It never refused the right of criticism to its dissidents, it never thought of refusing them the right to existence. It can, moreover, be asserted that if the Bolshevik Party had declared at the beginning that it meant to build up a totalitarian régime excluding all freedom of opinion to the workers it would not have triumphed —the masses do not battle in order to go to prison ; we know that, on the contrary, it announced the broadest labour democracy.

On the morrow of the disarming of the anarchist Black Guards in Moscow (1918), the anarchist-syndicalist daily newspaper continued to appear ; the anarchist-syndicalist publishing-house of *The Voice of Labour* (*Golos Truda*) disappeared only in 1925 or 1926 ; at the same time (that is, after the victory of the bureaucratic reaction) there also disappeared the organ of the left-wing social revolutionaries, *The Banner of Labour* (*Znamia Truda*). The anarchist paper *Pochin* (*The Beginning*) and *The Maximalist* succumbed a little earlier. The Menshevik Party had a daily newspaper in Moscow in 1919, *Vperyod* (*Forward*). Its factions maintained themselves in the soviets until 1923. The year 1927 must first be reached, at the moment when the bureaucracy consummates its victory in the party by the expulsion of the Trotskyists, before one can hear Tomsky and Bukharin proclaim with a single voice : "Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, two, three, or four parties may exist, but on the single condition that one of them is in power and the others in prison."*

We are quite familiar with the antipode of this theory of the prison-State ; it is Lenin's conception of the commune-State. The socialists know that they are not insured against mistakes, against defects,

* Bukharin in *Trud* of November 13, 1927, and Tomsky in *Pravda* of November 19, 1927. The corollary of this monstrous theory is : a single opinion in the single party and it soon becomes the opinion of a single one. Tomsky, Bukharin, and their friends did not have long to wait before experiencing at their own expense the virtues of the prison-State.

against deviations, against dissidence, or even against treason. But they are not founding a theocracy, they are emancipating the world. They cannot abandon the rigorous discipline of action without which no victory is possible, or the advantages of collective thought, any more than they can renounce imposing within the toiling classes the will of the majority and, at certain turning-points, the will of the vanguard upon that of the rearguard which is at once fearful, disabled, corrupted, and manœuvred by the bourgeoisie. They also know that socialism cannot live and grow without living thought—that is, without freedom of opinion, divergences, criticism by the masses, active public opinion, contrast of ideas. . . . On these points Stalinism has done immense damage to the working-class world, which the proletariat of the West alone can remedy. In theory and practice, the prison-State has nothing in common with the measures of public safety of the commune-State in the period of the battles : it is the work of the triumphant bureaucrats, who, in order to impose their usurpation, are forced to break with the essential principles of socialism and to refuse the workers any freedom at all.

IV

THE FATE OF THE COMMUNISTS—THE DEATH OF THE OPPOSITIONISTS

FOR much smaller divergences—in appearance—than those which formerly separated the Bolsheviks from the other socialist parties, the oppositionists have quickly become the most persecuted. That is so because they constituted the greatest danger to the bureaucracy, invoking against it a patrimony of common ideas—and invoking them better—and constantly putting it in contradiction to itself. In a word, the oppositionists enjoyed a clear moral and political superiority over the bureaucracy. Besides, they formed a veritable mass movement within the communist vanguard. And the further removed governmental morals were from those of the early days of the revolution, those days when the commune-State, the great workers' democracy, was the programme and the ideal of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the more brutally reactionary these morals became.

It is not yet sufficiently known how many assassinations, legal (but is it permissible to speak here of legality?) and otherwise, imparted to this struggle its fierce character, showing that one side would stop at nothing and that the other side would consent to any sacrifice rather than surrender.

Albert Heinrichsen was one of our first dead. I was in Leningrad when he was killed. He was a worker in a large factory in the suburb of Narva—the Putilov factories, if I am not mistaken—and the former commissar of a Red battalion at the front. When they came to arrest him (and the arrest of communists was then

still an innovation which aroused lively indignation), he flew into a passion against the agents of the G.P.U. : "Ah, you have come to the point of locking up the Leninists ! And you aren't ashamed of yourselves ! Thermidorians !" He was taken off almost by force without being allowed to kiss his wife, who later told us the story. The next day this working-woman, called by the chief of the preventive prison, was received by him with embarrassed looks. He ended by announcing the suicide of her husband and offering her the aid of 100 roubles. The woman wanted to see the body of the deceased ; no opposition was offered to that. Yet she had difficulty in finding him, until finally, thanks to active sympathies, she saw him in the morgue from which they were preparing to remove him. His mouth was torn, and his face and torso were covered with bruises. The autopsy recorded it without stating precisely the causes of the death. . . . A request for investigation addressed by the widow and his comrades to the Central Control Commission of the party remained without reply. Our personal investigation led us to conclude that Heinrichsen had been killed in his cell. We discovered by accident that *agents provocateurs* of the G.P.U. were operating among us. This happened at the end of 1927 or at the beginning of 1928.

My friend Vassili Nikiforovich Chadev was assassinated on August 26, 1928. Entering the party and the revolution in 1917, he had become an excellent journalist. His articles in the *Krasnaya Gazeta* of Leningrad on the new morals, housing, the tribunals, collected in a book, still retain their documentary interest. He was, among us, the author of a sort of agrarian programme advocating an effort at collectivization in the country. We were expelled together from the party, for we belonged to the same cell, where, alone among four hundred members who did not dare to commit themselves (although many of them were sympathetic to us), we frequently took the

floor. He did six months in prison, in secret, before consenting to engage himself not to be active, even though he kept his convictions. At this price he recovered his freedom and his job as correspondent of the *Krasnaya Gazeta*. But it was now out of the question to allow him to pursue the abuses in the workers' quarters. He was sent to report the first *colkhozes* of the Kuban, where he was assassinated on the highway, with the evident complicity of the local authorities, by bandits who remained unknown. We were refused authorization to bring his body back to Leningrad. We were refused authorization to dedicate a plaque to him.

About this time there died in prison, after an atrocious struggle, one of Trotsky's secretaries, George Valentinovich Butov. Already disquieting intrigues were being hatched around the Old Man.* Butov, collaborator of the Praesidium of the Supreme Council of the Army, was charged with espionage. It was the intention to extort from him declarations capable of compromising Trotsky, after which he would have been sent for ten years to the Solovietsky Islands. He spurned this infamous accusation, turned from accused into accuser, and died exhausted, after having carried on a hunger strike for half a hundred days. The similar death of the Lord Mayor of Cork shocked the civilized world on the morrow of the War. That of the upright revolutionist Butov remained unknown for a long time to his closest friends.

Our great comrade Yakov Gregorievich Blumkin was assassinated—shot—in December 1929. We shall see to it that this mighty figure of a fighter is not forgotten. He had lived an epic life. A terrorist of the left-wing social revolutionaries, in 1918 he executed, by order of his party, Count Mirbach, ambassador from Germany to Moscow. Joining the Communist Party a year later, he fulfilled the most perilous missions in the Ukraine, from which he returned

* Leon Trotsky is meant.—TRANSLATOR.

riddled with wounds. In Persia, at the beginning of 1919, he directed the revolutionary attempt of Kuchuk Khan in Ghilan. Later, organizer of the army of the republic of Mongolia, collaborator of *Izvestia*, for which he wrote noteworthy articles on Joffre and Foch, he executed secret missions in the Indies, in Egypt, in Constantinople. In Constantinople he saw the banished Trotsky and offered to transmit a message from him to comrades in Moscow. (This letter explained the tendencies among the Opposition abroad and asked that efforts be made to distribute in Russia the *Bulletin* published in Paris.) Betrayed upon his return to Moscow, he had an interview with Radek, who, according to my personal information, is supposed to have advised him to turn to Ordjonikidze, "the only man who might save you, for the Georgian* won't spare you". From Radek's place Blumkin telephoned to Ordjonikidze and made an appointment with him in the Kremlin, but the telephones were tapped, he was arrested as he came out, and then shot on the personal order of Stalin. He had lived courageously, he died the same way. I was assured that he asked for and obtained from the G.P.U. a stay of execution of 15 days to write his memoirs. The G.P.U. is now suppressing a magnificent book.

One of Blumkin's collaborators, a young Frenchman, was executed in the South. The formal justification of the execution of Blumkin was that he had committed, in his capacity as counter-espionage agent, an act of high treason in communicating with Trotsky. But the authorities did not dare to make public this execution in the U.S.S.R., where it was known to the public only through a dispatch of the *Berliner Tageblatt*. The communist organ of Vienna, *Rote Fahne*, denied it as an "infamous counter-revolutionary lie". In Moscow, however, there was circulated in the leading spheres of the party a version of an impudence

* Stalin.

hard to characterize. "Blumkin, feeling the gravity of his mistake, himself asked to be shot." It was also affirmed that he had committed suicide. The assassins, embarrassed, began to exaggerate. . . . I note here that Blumkin left a wife and a child. What has become of them ?

The still more mysterious execution of Silov and Rabinovich dates from the same time (the winter of 1929–30). According to my recollections, the affair stands thus : Rabinovich, a young communist, collaborator of the G.P.U., had communicated to his oppositional comrades information on the repression. He had just been married when he was arrested. He was shot for high treason. Silov, a non-party man, journalist or collaborator of a publishing service, was shot for having rendered him a service. An old Chekist of the civil war, Yoselevich, former member of the College of the Petrograd Cheka, was condemned to ten years in the penitentiary. A former member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International of Youth, Blumenfeld, was given the same penalty. Blumenfeld had shifted several times from the Opposition to Stalinism and back again, and his role in this drama has not been made clear.

From a protest addressed by the oppositional deportees of Tomsk to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, I extract the following lines which seem to refer to Comrade Pitersky, sent to the Solovietsky Islands in 1927 :

One of our comrades incarcerated in Solovky carried on a longer hunger strike in order to obtain the status of a political. He was shoved into the black hole. Coming out of it, he wrote a document on the monstrous rule of the camp and tried to get it to the authorities in Moscow. The message was intercepted. A short time later this comrade was led away and we never saw him again. The administration officially informed us that he had been killed in the course of an attempt to escape.

Like Liebknecht and so many others in the world! The Spaniards call this the "*ley de fuga*"—the law of flight—by analogy, no doubt, with the law of retaliation.

In 1930 a guardian of the Tomsk prison consented to pass through illegally to the outside a letter from the oppositionist Sosnovsky (since converted to the "general line"). He was arrested for this infraction of the regulations and was shot. We are not even aware of the name of this obscure victim.

These executions are certainly not the only ones. I cannot over-emphasize here the necessarily incomplete and fragmentary character of my documentation. In 1929-30, there was a German oppositional comrade in the Leningrad sailors' club who soon disappeared, accused of having established illegal contact with countries abroad. I heard it stated that he had been shot. Since everything happens in absolute secrecy, fortuitous circumstances are needed in order to learn, long months or years afterwards, that a militant whom one has known has mysteriously perished. Finally, one may die a more or less natural death in the prisons and places of deportation, as did Leon Papermeister, Red fighter in Siberia, who made a search for his mother in all the Central Homes of the U.S.S.R. and who died in one of them—I don't know which; there were four brothers, oppositional communists, all four of them in prison—on December 8, 1934.

Helen Tsulukidze—an old Georgian militant, member of the Bolshevik Party since the first revolution (1905), deported to Arkhangelsk and its cold climate, then to Khokand in the burning sands, beaten by her guardians in the course of a transfer—died for lack of medical care in Akmolinsk, in the sands of Kazakstan, at the beginning of 1932.

Kote Tsintsadze had preceded her to the grave at the beginning of 1931. He was one of the most esteemed of the Old Bolsheviks of the old groups in

the Caucasus. Stalin could not forgive him either his inflexible resistance or his past, his legendary record or his authority. With Stalin himself (Koba), Krassin, Kamo, Djorjiashvili, he had belonged since 1906 to the Bolshevik fighting organization which committed several famous assaults, such as the execution of General Griaznov, who repressed the revolutionary movement in Georgia (this terroristic act was organized by Stalin) and the attack upon a treasury wagon in Tiflis, where the revolutionists "expropriated" 341,000 roubles (June 26, 1907). In August 1911, Tsintsadze helped in the escape to a sort of eagle's nest of Kamo, who had been extradited from Germany and imprisoned in the fortress of Metekh in Tiflis. The following year the Bolshevik terrorists tried an expropriation on the road to Kodja. Tsintsadze and another gave battle to the Cossacks in order to save Kamo ; they killed seven of them, were taken alive together with Kamo, and were condemned to death. In Boris Souvarine's *Staline* will be found the detailed recital of these exploits, taken from the Soviet works formerly published in Moscow and now withdrawn, no doubt, from circulation.

After the expropriation of Tiflis, Litvinov was charged with transporting the funds abroad. He was arrested in Paris in 1908 and was found carrying a big sum of notes coming from the assault in the Erivan Square.

On the morrow of the sovietization of Georgia, Tsintsadze became the president of its Cheka. From 1923 onwards he fought against the bureaucratization of the régime. He was deported to the Crimea in 1928. From his prisons he had carried away an advanced case of tuberculosis. He could live a short while longer, but only in Abkhasia, in the invigorating and warm climate of the mountains. His relatives vainly solicited his transfer to these regions. Stalin seemed to want to hasten the end of his former companion-in-struggle. Tsintsadze died

persecuted, isolated, his mail confiscated, in the midst of the arrests of deportees, of brutalities, of raids. His death remains unknown to most people. A few of his last letters have been published. They are human documents of a tragic power.

I met Eleazar Solntsev in Moscow when he returned from America to offer himself to the blows of the repression. He had been sent on a mission, in the capacity of expert in economic questions. Friends advised him to remain abroad, seeing in him an economist and theoretician of a calibre seldom found in the young generation. I see him again, slender, grey-eyed, the elongated face, the serious expression with an ironical half-smile at the corner of his lips. He was incarcerated for three years in 1928, without the trouble of a formulated accusation against him—his communist convictions sufficed. At the expiration of the three years, two more were added by administrative measure, as was the case with most of the oppositionists. At the expiration of their five years these prisoners were finally liberated because all the detained Trotskyists (who were joined by the militants of the Sapronov tendency and the anarchists) had demanded, by means of a hard-fought hunger strike, the cessation of the automatic doubling of sentences pronounced without trial.

In deportation, I met a young woman who had known Solntsev in the Verkhne-Uralsk prison. She was still under the influence of his spiritual power and of his great mind. He looked incontestably like a leader, in the good sense of the word.

He was deported to a village of the Urals or of Western Siberia, whence he wrote us of his absolute solitude and his material poverty, because for several months he was unable to find any work. His wife and his child had been deported *elsewhere.* Two-thirds of his letters were "lost" upon arrival or upon departure, lost in the vast files of the Black Cabinet, of course. After the Kirov affair, a black

silence covered him up ; then we learned, by fragments, the story of his end. Arrested again, and again sentenced without trial to five years' imprisonment, he had categorically refused to allow the continuation of this cat-and-mouse game, declaring that he preferred to fling his corpse to the stranglers of the revolution. That would have been of some use, too. The eighteenth day of his hunger strike, when the doctors observed the aggravation of his condition, the G.P.U. yielded. He was informed that he would be maintained in the status of a deportee ; and this time he could even rejoin his wife and his son in Minussinsk. He insisted upon leaving immediately, even though he was at the end of his strength. On the way, his exhausted organism failed him, an inflammation of the interior ear boke out and necessited an immediate surgical operation. Solntsev died on a hospital cot in Novosibirsk in January 1936.

V

THE LIFE OF THE OPPOSITIONISTS

THE Trotskyist Opposition—which, in order the better to assert its attachment to the tradition of the October Revolution, calls itself Bolshevik-Leninist—is today virtually alone at the point of combat against the bureaucratic régime. The old parties do not renew themselves. Those who represent them leave the scene one after the other without being replaced, no propaganda being allowed them. The communist oppositional movement, on the other hand, renews itself within the ranks of the ruling party, whose living conscience it is and which it is constantly showing to be in conflict with the principles of Bolshevism. Just as the French bourgeoisie, trembling at the memory of the red banners of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, lived for a long time, after 1848, haunted by the spectre of socialism, so do the *parvenus* of Russia fall asleep every evening perturbed by the spectre of Trotskyism. No three months pass by without violent Press campaigns denouncing the evil all over again, or without *hundreds* of communists, official only yesterday, designated as Trotskyists despite themselves, perhaps simply for having manifested some intellectual bent, starting on the road to prison.

Many of the original Trotskyists have finished by yielding to the pressure of the totalitarian State. We have known, on the part of men who are incontestably worthy of better than the destiny to which they are resigned, amazing recantations, others that were ridiculous, and still others that were neither amazing

nor ridiculous because they only attested the impossibility of resisting further. Old Rakovsky, the man of the Rumanian revolution of 1917, the president of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukraine for many heroic years, later on ambassador of the U.S.S.R. in Paris, held out for six years in the suffocating exile of Barnaul. For months on end his friends failed to learn if he were dead or alive ; more than once he was thought dead. In Barnaul he wrote irrefutably correct pages on the bureaucratic régime and the decay of the party. Abruptly, in 1934, he made his apology, disavowed himself, and kneeled before Stalin. We thought that he had been blackmailed by reference to the imminent war and to the need of a sacred union of all the communists around the real power. In Moscow he obtained a subordinate position in the Commissariat of Public Health.

Sosnovsky, of the first troop of the party, capitulated in the same period, after six years of imprisonment. . . . Kasparova, deported in 1928, and her son in a penitentiary, did the same. . . . Piatakov, who played a big role in the sovietization of the Ukraine, oppositionist from 1923 to 1928, had abandoned the struggle at an early hour, saying that there was nothing that could be done : the reaction was triumphing all along the line, the proletariat was tired and depressed. Stalinism was, after all, the fruit of this situation ; there was nothing more to be done save to bow before the strongest and to make oneself useful, like an honest specialist. He was made a director of the State Bank. Radek reasoned in the same way.

The process of selection, nevertheless, shaped up men in the prisons who were ready to make a complete sacrifice and, what is more, who were sufficiently clear-sighted not to abdicate their reason in the absence of any objective information, of any intellectual intercourse, of any freedom. The persecution came down upon their heads with tenacity and increasing fury and, as in the religious wars of old, it spared

neither women nor children and did not recoil from the employment of any means.

Leon Davidovich Trotsky has not only been outrageously calumniated, vilified, excluded from the museums, from literature, from history—he who, more than anyone else, has entered into true history as the organizer of the revolutionary victory—deported, banished, deprived of Soviet nationality ; he has also been systematically struck at through his family. His wife, Natalia Ivanovna Sedova, his son Leon Lvovich, his daughter Zinaida Lvovna, because of their attachment to husband and father, have been treated as public enemies and have forfeited their Soviet nationality. His daughter Zinaida was unable to withstand this atmosphere of persecution. She committed suicide in 1933 in Berlin. His older daughter had died of tuberculosis in Moscow a short time earlier, in a state of penury. I know where her tuberculosis came from, having seen her, still an adolescent, actively working in Petrograd—the imperilled city—in the difficult moments. His two sons-in-law, Man Nevelson and Platon Volkov, have lived only in prison and in deportation since 1928. At the end of 1935 Volkov was in Semipalatinsk. His younger son, Sergei, who remained in Russia, was not interested in politics. An engineer and professor of technology in Moscow, he disappeared in 1935, as did his young wife. They are said to have been seen deported or imprisoned in Krasnoyarsk (Siberia).*

Of his four secretaries, one, Glazman, committed suicide in 1923 ; we already know that

* Natalia Sedova wrote in an appeal to the workers dated July 1935 : "It is only out of a base instinct of vengeance that the ruling bureaucracy strangles and tortures a highly qualified and incontestably loyal Soviet worker : for it is quite plain that the blows struck at the son cannot exercise the slightest influence on the political activity of the father, an activity in which our Sergei never took any part. That is why I permit myself to believe that the case of my son deserves to be brought before public opinion. Silence and impunity make us fear that the vindictiveness of Stalin will soon reach the point of the irremediable."

another, Butov, died in prison of a hunger strike lasting fifty days ; the two survivors, Poznansky and Sermux, have been in captivity since 1928. Finally, the first wife of Trotsky, divorced for some thirty years, but who remained his friend and comrade, Alexandra Lvovna Bronstein, a pedagogue esteemed in Leningrad, who has behind her more than forty years of devotion to the working-class, has been deported for years to the Tobolsk region. She had charge of Trotsky's grandchildren. What has become of them ?

Most of the oppositionists were expelled from the party in 1928 and immediately imprisoned : they still were in 1936. The G.P.U. disdained to seek any legal pretexts to motivate the three years of imprisonment that it inflicted upon them by administrative measure —to begin with. Ordjonikidze, then chairman of the Control Commission of the party—charged with superintending the execution of the laws—replied to an oppositionist who observed to him that nothing was left of Soviet legality for us : "Don't be astonished, you are outlaws." These first three years terminated, their penalties were prolonged two years when they rejected apostasy. Let us note this new custom, which is so very happily unknown to civilized countries. It must be excoriated sufficiently before the conscience of the masses so that no reaction shall dare, now or tomorrow, to avail itself of the example of Stalin. The prisoners of 1928 finished their five years in 1933–34, were deported, *arrested again* without any special reason after the Kirov affair, and *once more imprisoned for five years.*

This was and this is, with few variations, the fate of a young Leningrad professor who distinguished himself both by a book on Germany and by his activity as a militant, Gregory Yakovin ; of Vassily Fedorovich Pankratov, former Kronstadt sailor, civil-war fighter, Chekist, sub-chief of the G.P.U. of Transcaucasia, a man with a balanced mind, the

temperament of a calm hero, capable of accepting all eventualities with a firm smile ; of Shanan Markovich Pevzner, collaborator of the Commissariat of Finance in Moscow, wounded in the war of the Far East, deported for nearly two years, then imprisoned for four years, then deported to Orenburg for a year, then imprisoned in Cheliabinsk for five years ; of Eleazar Solntsev, whose death I have related ; of Socrates Gayvorkian, publicist from Baku ; of the young worker Dvinsky, of Leningrad (he was in Semipalatinsk in 1935) ; of Man Nevelson, already named, former head of the Fifth Red Army that won the decisive victories over Kolchak ; of the Old Bolshevik and hard-labour prisoner under the old régime, Grinstein ; of the writer Nicolas Gorlov, editor in 1917 of the *Pravda of the Trenches* ; of the brothers Aaron, Paul, and Samuel Papermeister, former Red partisans of Siberia ; of Anna Yankovskaya ; of Marie Ivanovna, Siberian militant who directed the illegal actions against the Whites ; of Ida Lemeleman—and of many others. . . .

Most of those persecuted are hit at through their near ones. Deported are the wife and the child of Solntsev (in Minussinsk) ; the sister of Pevzner (Arkhangelsk). . . . The sister of Zinoviev, the sister of Kuklin (an old Leningrad militant), the wife of Shaktsky (who was shot) are deported in a village of the Yenissei, not far from the Arctic Circle. . . . At Orenburg I knew the wife of Pankratov, Elisa Senatskaya, deported for her fidelity to her husband. She was pregnant when Pankratov, who had recently come out of prison, was again arrested. She remained without news from him for six months, then she was deported to Astrakhan together with her newly born infant. . . .

In the fate of others, the proportion between deportation, imprisonment, incarcerations of all sorts, and forced labour varies still more. I do not know the stages passed through by Fedor Dingelstedt, one of

the organizers of the Baltic Fleet in 1917, author of a work on *The Agrarian Question in India*. I only know that he went through several deportations, prisons, the Solovietsky Islands, before being deported to the environs of Alma-Ata. Boris Mikhailovich Eltsin, one of the old comrades of Lenin, fighter of the revolution in the Urals, member of the All-Russian Executive of the Soviets, has done nothing for the last eight years but go from prison to deportation, sicker every time, yet raising his black mane as soon as you speak of Hegel, of Marx, or of the international proletariat ; his son Sergei died in deportation ; his son Victor Eltsin was recently deported to Arkhangelsk, without being permitted to work.

Where is Maria Mikhailovna Yoffe ? Her husband, Adolf Yoffe, who gave proof of his merit as a revolutionist under the old régime, represented the Soviet in Berlin on the eve of and during the revolution of 1918, to which he was no stranger, then in Japan and in China, where he succeeded in winning the sympathy of Sun Yat-sen. He signed the peace treaty of Riga. Sick and cunningly hounded, he committed suicide in 1927 ; in his last letter he gave his action the sense of a supreme protest against the Stalinist régime. Shortly afterward his widow was deported to Kazakstan. Years later I learned that their only son had died of privations.* Then, at the expiration of her term, Maria Yoffe, accused of having tried to organize an action of solidarity for the comrades who had become destitute, was imprisoned and finally deported I know not where. . . .

Lado Dumbadze, old Georgian Bolshevik, former

---

* On the fate of children in deportation, Dr. Ciliga writes : "In Yeniseisk, where I spent a year, the children of Belov, who had recently arrived from a concentration camp, fell ill of undernourishment. They literally died of hunger before our eyes."

From a letter from Siberia : "Katya Kh. is in Chardyn with a twelve-month-old baby. She is not given any work. Her husband is in prison. She asks but one thing of the comrades : that they should not let her baby die." At the moment that this is being written, newspaper dispatches announce, on the morrow of the Zinoviev trial, the suicide of Maria Yoffe.

president of the Tiflis Soviet, suffering from progressive paralysis of the limbs as a result of a concussion received at the front during the civil war and so sick that his cell-mates have to dress and feed him, has been transferred from prison to prison since 1934, in search of a treatment that they do not want to grant him ; he was finally deported to Sarapul, alone, absolutely alone, without resources or the possibility of work. . . . Lado Yenukidze spent five years in prison, after which he was sent to the Oost-Pechorsk concentration camp, together with Belov, Boiko, and others. Forced labour behind barbed wires, in a frozen desert land !

Joseph Krasskin, after imprisonment, was deported to Turukhansk. Does this name mean nothing to you ? It is on the Yenissei, latitude 62° N., 1000 kilometres from the nearest railway station, a straggling village of a few dwellings in which the tourists and the writer friends of the U.S.S.R. will never set foot. Aurora borealis. . . . I remember a remark made by Smilga, himself imprisoned in 1933 in Verkhne-Uralsk : "When you have such vast polar regions and so many steppes at your disposal, you really do not need the guillotine." That was true only for a time. . . .

In the spring of 1936, Vladimir Kossior, one of the founders of the Russian trade unions and of the Bolshevik Party, was deported to Minussinsk ; Musya Magid was in the same town after six months of illness on a prison cot ; Mikhail Andreyevich Polevoy had just been arrested in Kursk after his fourth year of deportation ; Trukhanov, former Red fighter, a Leningrad millinery worker, was in Byisk (Siberia). Nicolai Muralov, who played a great role in the street battles of Moscow in 1917, has been deported for the past eight years in the region of Novosibirsk ; Mikhail Bodrov has just been sent to a concentration camp after the usual vicissitudes. I do not know the whereabouts of Dora Zack, fighter of 1905, who came

out of General Denikin's torture-chamber a sick woman. Ida Shumskaya is alone and without bread in a village of Siberia. Where are the three Yugoslavian militants, Stenka Dragič, Stephan Haeberling, Mustapha Dedič, arrested in 1933?

In Orenburg, in addition to the comrades already named, I knew Boris Ilych Lakhovitsky, a tailor from Minsk, a maimed civil-war fighter, who was driven by unemployment to the point of misery before being sent to a concentration camp; Alexis Semenovich Santalov, lathe-hand from Leningrad, participant in both 1917 revolutions, deported and then sent for five years to the Karaganda concentration camp; Lyda Svalova, a Perm worker, machine operator, whose whole youth has been spent in deportation; Yakov Belenky, history professor, deported after three years' imprisonment; Yakov Byk, tannery worker, Red fighter of the Ukraine, deported after years in prison and a sojourn in Solovky; Fanya Upstein, young militant from Odessa, deported for three years after her imprisonment; Leonid Girchek, former *chargé* of the commercial mission in Persia, imprisoned several times; Vassily Mikhailovich Chernykh, former commissar at the front, head of a Ural Cheka, in his eighth year of peregrinations between prison and deportation. . . . The accident of a common captivity brought me the acquaintance of these communists so exemplary in the firmness of their convictions and the seriousness of their devotion. I address to them here the respects of a loyal memory. What is to become of them now that they are the object, day in and day out, of the demand of the Soviet Press that the oppositionists be shot "like dirty dogs"? This is the approved formula.

May I be permitted to dwell here for a moment on my own experience? It is not lacking in a certain interest. I was expelled from the party in 1928 and immediately imprisoned. I owe the recovery of my freedom to the efforts of my Parisian friends, but from

that moment onward it became impossible for me to publish a single line in the U.S.S.R. and increasingly difficult to make my living. The persecution soon descended on the heads of my near relatives. My father-in-law, an old dye-worker and political émigré, founder of a trade union of Russian sailors in Marseilles, expelled from France in 1919 for having organized a strike on a Russian boat loaded with ammunition for the Whites, was driven from the factory and the union, doomed to unemployment, threatened with capital punishment after a sordid quarrel which was provoked by a G.P.U. spy who was charged with watching my domicile. Without the intervention of Panait Istrati, of myself, and of several others, poor old Russakov would surely have been put to death! My wife could not endure this atmosphere; she contracted a serious malady of the nerves which we found it impossible to cure, the good health-establishments being reserved, it goes without saying, to the right-thinkers. This lasted for five years.

In 1932, the persecution was resumed with a new fury, because we were right in the midst of the famine and of the terror. The old man was refused bread-cards and internal passports. They thought better of it later, it is true, but he died—his heart. . . . I was arrested and deported in 1933. Deported for three years, at the same time with me, were two valiant communists of Moscow, guilty of knowing me: Sheva Ghenkina, secretary of the Red International of Miners, whose husband was already in Central Asia; and Nadyezhda Moisseyevna Almaz, fighter in the Urals in 1918, secretary to Losovsky, sent to Astrakhan, where she was doomed to unemployment. My sister-in-law, Anita Russakova, who worked as my typist, did three months in the secret prison and was then released. Imprisoned again at the beginning of 1936. . . . Nothing is clearer in my mind than the reasons behind this all-too-common affair. Right after my

arrival in the West, I wrote on this point to my friend Magdeleine Paz :

They finished [at the magistrate's examination] *by presenting me with a forgery—a flagrant, unmistakable forgery signed, apparently, by my sister-in-law. . . . When I grew angry, it was withdrawn and the young woman was given back her freedom. But last December, when my departure abroad and consequently my passage through Moscow became imminent, she was arrested; after three months of secret examination, she has just been deported to Viatka for five years. She is a minor employee, entirely apolitical, of a skittish and timid nature. The game is odiously clear : it had to be made impossible for me, meeting her in Moscow, to have any light thrown on the dirty trick that had failed against me. Inquisitors who, in spite of everything, may be called upon to answer for their conduct—above all when they fail—defend their careers.*

The principal one attempted, by making use of this forgery, to dictate to me, I repeat it, *entirely false* confessions. . . . I declare that no definite charge was brought to my attention. The first interrogation began with these words: "Well, what do you think of the general line?" Then the question was raised of my books published in Paris, of an appraisal I had formulated on the poet Selvinsky in a letter to the *Journal des Poètes* of Brussels, of my relatives. . . . I understand that *agents provocateurs* had been sent to me, without success, however.

It is plain that without the struggle that was carried on for my liberation by a few old friends and a number of French comrades, my independence of thought alone would have condemned me to perpetual captivity, not free from other risks. . . . An old oppositionist, a translator known in the literary circles of Moscow, Jean Renaud, had the courage to come to visit me in Orenburg ; he disappeared on the way

back and it has been impossible for me to find a trace of him. When I was finally able, thanks to the campaign of protest conducted abroad, to leave the U.S.S.R., the Soviet censor illegally retained all the personal papers that I wanted to take along and all my unpublished manuscripts, three completed works, the fruit of years of labour. Everything is under lock and key. I left behind many who are dear to me. It is impossible for me to know what has become of them, impossible to know if they are paying for their affection for me with iniquitous sufferings. The Black Cabinet has cut me off from all correspondence. Three months after my departure, a decree that they did not trouble to motivate—and for which no legal motivation can be found, unless they resort to inventions that would not stand up under the slightest critical examination—deprived us, me and mine, of Soviet nationality.

I had the following brief colloquy with the Soviet functionary who informed me of it : "Don't I have the right to be heard before a decision of such importance is made against me?" "It doesn't seem like it." "Might I not know the reasons?" "It doesn't seem like it." "Don't I have the right of defence?" "It doesn't seem like it." "Or of appeal?" "You can write to Moscow." "And this measure applies also to my eighteen-months-old baby girl, who cannot, I think, be reproached for subversive ideas? Does this measure also affect my sick grown-up girl?" "That's it exactly."

And I haven't said everything about the persecution of those near to me.

. . . . .

There is an old group of oppositionists that advocates democratic centralization in the party. These militants differ from the Trotskyists in the fact that they long ago denied that the bureaucratic régime has any socialist character. The two leaders

of this tendency, like all its supporters, have been in captivity since 1928. Both of them, Vladimir Mikhailovich Smirnov and Timothey Sapronov, took a direct part in the October Rebellion. Vladimir Smirnov was one of the leaders of the insurrection in Moscow. Incarcerated for a long time, he almost lost his sight in the Suzdal prison. At the end of his five years of imprisonment he was deported to Ulala, in Oyratia, where he had two weeks of comparative liberty before being thrown into prison again for five years. Sapronov was recently in the Verkhne-Uralsk "solitary". Both men are worn down, sick and intractable. . . .

Thousands of names would be needed here, totalling tens of thousands of years of proscription for the Opposition, and nobody knows how many hidden dramas. Here are some data on the arrests : at the beginning of 1928, from 3000 to 4000 ; October 1929, about 1000 in the large centres ; January 1930, 300 in Moscow ; May 1930, on the occasion of the Sixteenth Congress of the party, from 400 to 500 in Moscow ; August 1930, several hundreds. In 1931–32 there were no more oppositionists at large. At the end of 1932, hundreds of former oppositionists, readmitted into the party, were again arrested.

None of these men committed any crime save that of expressing his opinion and of demanding, inside the party, the right of criticism and of discussion. Those who tried to resort to "illegal" action, like an Eltsin or a Yakovin, came together among themselves, clandestinely, and at most published a few multi-copied tracts. . . . These men made the workers' revolution. They were the builders of the Soviet Republics. They spilled their blood for them, lived for them, accepted all the tasks for them. They are carrying on ! These pages, I feel, are depressingly monotonous. All these dismal destinies seem to repeat themselves, all these men move about in a hopeless greyness . . . prisons, "solitaries", Verkhne-Uralsk,

Suzdal, Tobolsk, Yaroslavl, Cheliabinsk, hunger-strikes, S O S's that nobody hears, bullyings, muted struggles in the dungeons, futile heroism and stoicism, deportation, deportation, deportation . . . and over again, prison, prison, indefinitely. . . .

The year 1936 rang in the ears of the prisoners with the noise of the shootings that approached. Yes, this struggle of revolutionists against the machine that grinds down everything has about it something depressing when you think of it in that way, in the abstract, without seeing the simple and shrewd faces, without being well acquainted with their lives, seeing the Russian land, the walls, the windows. I would like to efface this impression. Every one of these men has his true grandeur. They are not vanquished, they are resisters, and they often have victorious souls. All of them have done a good stint of work from the first hours of the transformation of the world. They know it and they know that they are right. What is best and clearest in the conscience of the masses, which tomorrow, sooner or later, will awaken, lives in them. They stand up, and they stand up alone in this country, solid and faithful. You can count on them.

VI

THE CAPITULATORS

A NUMBER of fighters of the revolution, after having tried to resist the bureaucratization of the party and the personal politics of Stalin, soon begged for mercy under the blows of the repression, forswore their convictions of yesterday, multiplied their demonstrations of servility to the Leader. . . . That began in 1928. Some capitulated as a tactic, others out of weakness or self-interest. With all of them, the attachment to the old party was a decisive psychological factor. The demoralization that resulted from these disavowals ended by making the atmosphere of the party unbearable.

Let us point out, at the outset, that physical resistance has its limits. A man resists for five years, eight, ten ; then he begins to weaken, for he can do no more. He writes to the Central Committee that he abjures his mistakes, condemns his comrades of yesterday, admires above all the gifted Leader who . . . Other guarantees are often asked of him : become an informer.* Then he is given a small job. Peace. (Not for long, as we shall see.) Here are a few lines from a letter of a deported oppositionist.

T. capitulated at the end of two years of deportation. He says that he was driven to the end of his tether. He writes :

---

* My comrade Yurgens, of Leningrad, who had bowed to the general line of the party although she refused to become an informer, was the object of such persistent persecution that, her nerves completely shattered, she put an end to her life (1932).

I am an invalid, I have sick nerves, an ulcer of the stomach, scurvy to boot (acquired in prison), and these are the main causes of my retreat, although I am also pessimistic about the future of our struggle.

I remember a Leningrad worker who came to ask my advice before capitulating. He had children; his hand mutilated, there was only one enterprise where he could work and he knew that he would be turned out if he persisted in asserting his convictions.

Finally, every oppositionist being condemned to enforced inaction, many men, accustomed to intensive work in an epoch when it was a matter of building up in order to continue the revolution, have recanted so that they might be permitted to work. The fear of fascism and war has forced others to sacrifice their thoughts so as to remain with the great historical force which—they hope—embodies the socialist revolution despite the worst mistakes.* The maintenance of a conviction in a totalitarian State is a daily feat that implies a genuine stoicism and a tenacious clear-sightedness, in addition to a spirit of sacrifice. No aid to expect from anywhere, no escape possible, no perspective of relief—keep that well in mind.

Many oppositionists would not, however, have arrived at that point if they had demonstrated more civic courage from the very beginning. There were revolutionists who made a tactic out of capitulation, duplicity, mental reservations, even treason. Their devotion assumed this monstrous form under the pressure of the despotism. Heavy indeed are the responsibilities of the Zinoviev-Kamenev tendency in this respect. In order to maintain themselves

---

* The oppositionists do not have the monopoly of these capitulations. Thus, the anarchist Arshinov, companion-in-struggle of Makhno, bowed before Stalinism in 1935, at a time when precious few illusions were permitted a libertarian spirit.

regardless of cost in the Stalinist Party—where it had been definitely decided not to let them live—the militants of this group did not recoil from the worst debasement. Three times in less than five years they were expelled, three times they renewed their submission under the most humiliating conditions, three times Stalin, who needed now them and now their humiliation, had them readmitted before flinging them into prison for ten years, inflicting upon them a supreme degradation, and finally having them massacred.

Their tactic of "going back into the party on your belly", according to a phrase of Zinoviev's, ended in political suicide. I have known some of them who, under the blows of the persecution, in the courtyards of the prisons, continued to declare themselves "100 per cent" Stalinists ; but who, in intimate conversation with the reliable oppositionist from whom one need fear no denunciation, unburdened themselves with boundless bitterness. In effect, they thought thus : "There is nothing to do outside the party. Remain there at all costs, waiting for the hour when we will finally be able to try making a change. Whoever separates himself from the party is automatically playing the game of the counter-revolution. We will submit to all the affronts, all the iniquities, in order to stay in it, the essential thing being to find yourself there on the day when the inevitable hour of the crisis of the régime strikes."

The Opposition, called "Leningrad" because it was crystallized in the former capital where all the old cadres were devoted to the ex-president of the Soviet, Zinoviev, was itself basically bureaucratic. Formed by functionaries who had been the first to apply the methods of constraint and corruption in the party, it was in large measure a coterie turned out of power, fighting to regain it and thereupon brought round to raising the great questions of principle. Its momentary merit was to do it in an internationalist

and proletarian spirit. For many of the old Bolsheviks the bureaucratic system was not an evil in itself; the evil was that it carried on a false policy. As if it could have carried on any other policy but one of self-preservation! Their narrowly intolerant minds pictured a State confounded with the party apparatus, and the party ruled by the Old Guard, as something far superior to a commune-State and workers' democracy. In this sense they differed from the Stalinists only by their more faithful and clearer socialist conceptions. The intense Press campaigns, the phraseology of the congresses, the implacable repression, disturbed their minds sufficiently to make their capitulations always half sincere.

Let us also take into consideration the obscurity of the problems. Today we see that these struggles brought to grips the working-class and a new social stratum of *parvenus*; they appeared far less clearly a few years ago to the militants engaged in action. They tore apart a party once strongly cemented, separated old companions-in-struggle. On both sides the same phrases were employed, on both sides there was the claim of supporting the same ideas. The very formula of socialism in a single country, so characteristic of Stalinism, was enveloped in such billowy contexts that it might appear to be an expression of internationalism. The official thesis was that socialism could be built up in a single country, but that the construction would not be completed by the passage to communism without the support of the international revolution. But the accent put on the first proposition really annihilates the second. The obscurity of the debates, an often exaggerated feeling of external dangers, the attachment to the unity of the party, the basically healthy even if not clairvoyant feeling that brothers were rending each other apart, the bureaucratic spirit of many of the best men—these are the factors that explain the defeat of a large part of the Oppositions. Fear, material

privations, the physical difficulty of resisting are certainly secondary factors.

Beginning with 1928, Zinoviev and Kamenev drew many thousands of communists along the road of capitulations of conscience. They obviously could not rally to Stalin except with tongue in cheek; nobody had any illusions on that score. Would they be allowed, while keeping silent in the ranks, to retain their private opinion of the Leader and his policy? Stalin could not allow it, his credit was too weak. The speeches of the former oppositionists who mounted the tribunes of the congresses to flagellate themselves before him no longer carried conviction. Their value was known, everybody had gone through that and those who had always kept quiet knew that they themselves were no better—on the contrary—than the vanquished who were so zealous in dishonouring themselves upon command. They also knew that tomorrow they might be commanded to do the same thing. There was no longer, in reality, either credit or discredit—everything was false except force itself. There remained the fact that certain men had been the companions and the confidants of Lenin, that they had recognized capacities and more impressive biographies than those of the Leader. There remained also the fact that those who had once raised their voices against him would never appear to him to be sufficiently reliable, sufficiently muzzled, sufficiently outraged.

The dictator felt that, at bottom, no matter what was said, they *could not* rally to him. He knew that, having arrived at the zenith of power, he could not tolerate comparison with anybody. In December 1932, everything that remained of an Opposition being in prison, he turned inexplicably upon his strangled party, and arrests began by the hundreds. Ex-Trotskyists were the first to go to the inner prison of Dzerzhinsky Square, formerly the Lubianka, situated behind the figured façade of the old building of an insurance company.

Ivan Nikitich Smirnov, one of the finest figures of the old party, an oppositionist of 1923, who rallied to Stalin in 1928, was arrested and mysteriously sentenced to ten years of imprisonment. We will speak of him again, and of his fate. . . . Ivar Theunissovich Smilga, member of the Central Committee that carried through the October 1917, charged by Lenin with directing the operations of the Baltic Fleet, later a member of the Supreme War Council, one of the men who marched on Warsaw in 1920, member of Planning Commissions, oppositionist of 1927 who rallied in 1928, was imprisoned for five years in Verkhne-Uralsk. Mrachkovsky, one of the greatest soldiers of the Red Army, born in prison, riddled with wounds in the Urals, later the builder of a strategic railway in the Far East, who also rallied, lands in the same "solitary". (He is the one to whom, a short time earlier, Stalin had complained in the course of a private conversation that he was surrounded only by imbeciles.)

The batch taken in the winter of 1932–33 comprised several hundred communists who could, strictly speaking, be accused of hidden sympathy for Trotsky. In the same period hundreds of party functionaries, many members of the Government, a whole mass of Marxian professors belonging to a right-wing tendency which did not proclaim itself, but, on the contrary, constantly disavowed itself, are thrown into prison. Among them were Eismont, Vice-Commissar of the People for Agriculture, and Tolmachev, representative of this Commissariat in the Northern Caucasus. Both were influential Old Bolsheviks. Both had spoken in private against the abuses of the forced collectivization. Since their arrest in 1932 nobody knows exactly what has become of them. A recent rumour said that they had been stood up against the wall and shot.

In prison also are the professors of the Communist Academy, disciples of Bukharin—who hastens to

disavow them, according to the custom: Sliepkov, Astrov, Maretsky, Eikhenwald. . . . In prison also is the former secretary of the Moscow organization, Riutin, guilty of having compared the Leader to the *agent provocateur* Azev and of having rendered belated justice to Trotsky—all this in a document which circulated from hand to hand. Since he is supposed to have written that the Leader had to be "removed from power at all costs", an allusion to terrorism is seen in the phrase and he is sentenced to capital punishment. But they dared not execute him, and all traces of him have been lost in the prisons.

In prison are the old worker Bolshevik Kayurov, esteemed by Lenin, and almost his entire family. In prison is Nesterov, collaborator of Rykov in the presidency of the Council of People's Commissars. In prison is the historian Nevsky, who never belonged to any opposition.

1935: on the morrow of the Kirov affair a categorical instruction sent to the party committees and to the G.P.U. ordered the arrest of anybody who once belonged, no matter to what extent, to an opposition. . . . Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bakayev, former president of the Petrograd Cheka, Yevdokimov, former secretary of the Central Committee, Gertik, Fedorov, Safarov, and others are sentenced after a secret trial to long terms of imprisonment for moral complicity in the assassination. Official communiqués announce the sending to concentration camps or to deportation of 100 communists of the same tendency. In reality, several thousands suffer the same fate. Among them are: Kostina, former secretary of the Petrograd Soviet, Vuyo Vuyovich, a Yugoslavian militant, former secretary of the Communist International of Youth, his wife Budzinskaya, Zosia Unschlicht (the sister of the Government official of the same name), Rotskan, Nathanson, Olga Ravich, who shared Lenin's exile in Switzerland,

Hessen, the literary critics Lelevich, Gorbachev, Ilya Vardyn, the historian Anishev.*

In prison are the veterans of the Workers' Opposition of 1921 : Shliapnikov, of the metal-workers' union, one of those rare Bolsheviks who took an active part in the whole revolution, beginning with the fall of Nikolai II, and his friend Medvedyev, both sick and discouraged. . . . "Solitary" of Verkhne-Uralsk.

In prison. . . .

In prison. . . .

---

* In Orenburg I met many communists suspected of lukewarmness towards the Leader, although they called themselves Stalinists : Mdineradze, professor of philosophy in Moscow ; Dimitriev, professor of history in Ivanovo-Voznessensk (he was soon interned in a concentration camp) ; Boris Prozorov, professor of history in Dniepropetrovsk ; Maria Sorkina, wife of a suspect of Trotskyism (Konstantinov, of Moscow, imprisoned, and then deported to Arkhangelsk) ; Radyn, former member of the regional committee of Samara ; Ivan Bocharov, former regional secretary ; Russin, teacher in Irkutsk ; Chervonoborodov and his wife ; Solovian Jr. and his wife (Solovian Sr. had been deported to Krasoyarsk) ; Tsuladze, former member of the Tiflis Government ; Yudin, a Moscow functionary ; Kaznatcheyev, former Kronstadt sailor, sent to a concentration camp for the second time, and many others.

VII

THE CULT OF THE LEADER

THE repression has thus decimated the Communist Party. Its oldest cadres have disappeared. The principal survivors of the illegal struggles against the old régime and of the heroic times are in prison. Tens of thousands of minor functionaries of the party, made responsible at every turn for the disastrous effects of the internal policy, have experienced the inquisition. To voice an opinion, a judgment, a vote, to take an initiative, has long been out of the question in this party, which is, actually, anything but a party. Appointed from top to bottom, beginning with the General Secretary, the hierarchy of secretaries wants docile and zealous executants, never docile enough, never zealous enough, and always kept under suspicion themselves.

No matter how submissive they may be, these executants have no real security. Dark blows are periodically struck among them. When the order comes from Moscow to disclose the Trotskyists who are surely hidden in the heart of the organization, every committee knows how matters stand. If it replies, "But we haven't any!" it will be upbraided, at the very least, for its lack of vigilance, more probably for sabotaging the defence of the party against the internal enemy, and perhaps for itself falling into Trotskyist counter-revolution. It must find victims in its midst and invent crimes for them. The unfortunates who are picked, by intrigue or chance, to enact this role will protest in vain their devotion to the Leader, their right-thinking faith, but they will not escape either prison or concentration camp. I have met hundreds of these Trotsky-

ists in spite of themselves who continue, under implacable sentences, to affirm their undeviating fidelity to Stalin, to spy upon each other, and to accept any dirty job in the hope of being restored to grace.

The life of the party is reduced to the life, very intense, of the bureaux. They name the administrators of production and of commerce, the holders of the power ; nothing escapes their supervision. There is no position, no matter how slight in importance, that is not watched by a party member, who is himself watched by others and whose dossier is in the local committee. This system, far from preventing corruption and abuses, really necessitates them. What haven't we seen ? One of the directors of the economic institutions of Leningrad, Kolgushkin, turned out to be, a few years ago, a former *agent provocateur* or informer. They confined themselves to displacing him.

Oppositionists deported to Siberia discover that the authorities are constituted out of former functionaries and non-commissioned officers of Admiral Kolchak ; they denounce this fact and they are the ones to be imprisoned. Somewhere in Siberia, it is learned that prostitutes have been shot as "incorrigible" and, moreover, as "incurably sick". An inquiry is launched, but a member of the Central Committee, who was all-powerful in Vladivostok for a long time, covers up the shooters. (The story is an old one, this man having since been run out.) In 1929 four presidents of the regional tribunal of Leningrad, Tomashevsky, Okudjava, Derzybashev—the fourth name escapes me—were shot : the first two were convicted of connections with bandits, a third was a former *agent provocateur*. Derzybashev, my neighbour, a fairly honest man, was the victim of his intractable character, having refused to play the role of scapegoat. Periodically discoveries are made of "centres of corruption" almost everywhere, and men are sabred and men are shot. Since they are discovered by command, there are not a few innocent

victims, and since nothing is changed in the system, corruption continues to exist in the midst of the terror.

Apart from its administrative functions, the party has no political life. For many years now the large meetings of "active members" where discussions took place are no longer held. The functionaries are convoked several times a year to hear the reports commenting on the words of the Leader and to vote unanimously, after the customary ovations, their enthusiastic approbation. That is all. These resolutions are always adopted after the fact. Formal though these consultations of the party are, they never deal with anything but accomplished facts. You are invited, for example, to approve the entry of the U.S.S.R. into the League of Nations ; you were not invited, even as a matter of form, to debate it in advance. In the ranks the cells of the party come together to study the speeches of the leaders, that is, to hear them read (for nobody takes the chance of expounding them in his own way), and to repeat, everyone in his turn, a few passages from them.

The fear of heresy is such that the repetition, word by word, of the official terms has become the custom. If *Pravda* has labelled the oppositionists as "miserable social dregs", nobody will say differently. At the Seventh Congress of the Communist International the spokesman of Stalin presented Dimitroff from the tribune in these words : "Long live the pilot of the Communist International, our comrade Dimitroff !" For the entire Press, for all the orators, Dimitroff became *the pilot* from that moment on. Nobody allowed himself to say the leader, the chief, the guide, the animator, the conductor. No, it's the pilot. Any variation from the vocabulary itself becomes a crime. Not a breath of thought passes through the party that has been turned over to idolatry of the Leader.

Open up the Press of the party : since there is no other, this means the Press as a whole. *Not a single article* of a journal or a review that does not begin and

end with quotations from the words of the Leader. Let us open up any chance number of a newspaper, the Moscow *Izvestia* or *Pravda*, big papers circulated throughout the U.S.S.R. Here is *Izvestia* of August 2, 1936. The editorial, entitled "Towards New Victories", invokes the "wise thought of Stalin" four times in two columns. The peroration of a speech of the People's Commissar of Transportation, Kaganovich, in two columns, carries this sub-heading : "Let Us Learn from the Great Locomotive Engineer of the Revolution, Comrade Stalin." In two hundred lines "our great Stalin" is quoted seventeen times and almost every time with several lines of eulogy.

"By his Leninist firmness, his wisdom, his stoicism, his great and gifted mind, his perspicacity, his practical work, by the education and organization of men, Comrade Stalin is assuring us the victory over the enemies of our country !" (*Thunderous acclamations, cries : Hurrah !*)

Thus the fifth paragraph :

"Let us persevere in the Stalinist course of our international policy !" (*Applause.*) "The greatest document in history, the Stalinist Constitution !" (*Applause.*) "Stalin has incorporated into the Constitution his Leninist love of the people. . . ."

And here, translated word for word, are the last lines of this report :

"Let us gather still more closely around the Central Committee and the Government and, under the leadership of Stalin, let us win new victories ! Hurrah for our great Stalin !" (*Thunderous applause. The ovations follow without interruption. Cries : Hurrah ! Long live the great Stalin ! Long live the organizer of our victories, Comrade Stalin ! Long live the creator of the Soviet Constitution, our dear Stalin ! Long live our beloved People's Commissar, Comrade Kaganovich ! The unanimous audience rises and sings the "International".*)

All the speeches at all the congresses are of the same type. On important occasions the hurrahs, the applause, the epithets bestowed upon the gifted Leader, father of the country, leader of the world proletariat, "the greatest man of all times", "the greatest man of the greatest epoch in history", run to twenty lines and those twenty lines are begun all

over again four or five times in the same number of the paper. To finish my description of a typical number of *Izvestia*, I add that the one I have just quoted devotes, on four pages, ten full large columns to the enumeration, which is obviously devoid of any interest, of the 248 food workers decorated with the Order of Lenin. Twelve large columns are occupied by the speech of Kaganovich (plus a large-size portrait). On the events in Spain, where the destiny of the Western proletariat is at stake, there are three brief dispatches.

Another number of *Izvestia* picked out quite by chance offers us a bit of the style, characteristic in the sense that thousands just like it have appeared and do appear. The coal-miners of the Karaganda desert (Kazakstan) address "to the great leader of the peoples, our dear and beloved comrade Stalin" a message of thanksgiving (how should they express themselves otherwise if they want to be exact?), in which the personal pronouns and the possessive adjectives, when they refer to the Leader, are printed in capital letters, as is usually done in addressing monarchs. It is a new trait, and I underscore it.

> It is [the miners write] *Your* great love that warms us and inspires us. . . . Inspired by *You*, our wise teacher . . . We promise *You* to multiply the number of shock workers and Stakhanovists.

In substance, they thank him for having created the mining basin of Karaganda. They do not say, naturally, that this basin is the centre of an immense concentration camp, that the work in the mines is done in largest measure by condemned men, that perhaps a number of the signatories to this document are themselves condemned men, that the Karaganda is one of the most dreaded camps for the hunger that rages there, for its remoteness from all civilization, for the harshness of its inner rule. Many of these miners are Turkmen, Tadjkis, Uzbeks, Sarts from Central Asia, and everybody in Russia knows that these nomad peoples, accustomed to the open air,

adapt themselves with difficulty to industrial labour, and hardest of all to labour in the mines ; their mortality rate is very high, their productivity is often derisory. The message closes this way :

Under the leadership of our great and glorious Communist Party, under Your leadership, Comrade Stalin, we are successfully building up a new mechanized basin, we are building up a new, free, happy, and civilized life. We shall make of Karaganda the city of coal, of coke, of verdure, of flowers, one of the fortresses of the defence of our socialist fatherland. The hearts of all the workers of these mines overflow with a burning love for the fatherland, with a great pride in the socialist victories, with a boundless love and devotion for our dear Communist Party and for You, our dear teacher and leader, Comrade Stalin.

The bard Kazak Djambul has expressed our feelings in these words :

"Stalin ! Thou hast annihilated the fortress of our enemies !
Beloved ! Thou art the dweller of my soul !
The tellers of tales no longer know with whom to compare thee,
The poets have not enough pearls with which to describe thee !"

Long live the triumph of the Leninist-Stalinist national policy ! Long live our socialist fatherland ! Long live the great party of Lenin and Stalin !

Right after this, the same issue gives a brief message from the sailors of the cruiser *Marat* "to Comrade Stalin, teacher and leader of the world proletariat". Let us quote :

Our dear and beloved Josef Vissarionich ! Sailors, officers, and political collaborators of the vessel of the line *Marat*, we send You the militant salute of the Red Fleet. Object of Your tenderness, animated by Your fatherly love and Your fatherly solicitude, the men of our magnificent fatherland are accomplishing miracles such as the world has never seen and are multiplying exploits on land, in the air, on the water and under the water.

There follow ten lines of the same type.

We shall not spare our efforts and we shall, if need be, give our lives for the happiness of our country and the great work of Lenin-Stalin ! Long live the wise and beloved Leader of the toilers of the universe, the great Stalin !

(*Izvestia*, August 15, 1936.) In another number of *Izvestia* I find this declaration by the aviator Chkalov, who has just been decorated :

Where Stalin appears, the shadows are dispelled and the sun shines.

In a word, the Sun Leader.

The cult of the Leader leads to the deification of the Leader. . . . An editorial in *Izvestia* (August 23, 1936) says, textually, "Stalin, our sun, and his genius which . . .". *Pravda* of August 28, 1936, published the translation of an Uzbek poem which attributes to the Leader the creation of the world :

> O great Stalin, O leader of the peoples,
> Thou who broughtest man to birth,
> Thou who fructifiest the earth,
> Thou who restorest the centuries,
> Thou who makest bloom the spring,
> Thou who makest vibrate the musical chords.
>
> . . . .
>
> Thou, splendour of my spring, O Thou,
> Sun reflected by millions of hearts. . . .

The reader will excuse these tedious quotations if he remembers that a people of 170,000,000 men has had no other spiritual nourishment for many years ; that this people finds these texts again and again, every day, in every periodical ; that they are shown in large letters in the cinemas, the theatres, the hospitals, the prisons, the stores, the clubs, the schools, the barracks, the streets. It would be wrong to conclude, as do certain travellers who are, in reality, not very conscientious, that this shows a widespread mysticism among the masses. Messages of this sort are written by the local secretaries of the party on the precise instructions of the propaganda section of the Central Committee. They are manufactured, the audience raises its hand (woe to him who would shrug his shoulders !), and everybody goes home, happy at not having to think about it any more. A directive says that the texts emanating from the Caucasus or from Asia ought to end with a few verses from a national poet. Thousands of messages contain these few verses, because a bard like Djambul is always to be

found ; he is, moreover, rather well paid for these rhymes.

The style reminds one of the Assyrian inscriptions and of the manner of the poets at the court of ancient Persia. King of Kings, Chieftain of Chieftains, Beloved, Sun ; servility has never found other words with which to speak to despotism.

The invariable portrait of the Leader in a jacket or a uniformed great-coat, with a sort of military bearing that makes him look like a non-commissioned cavalry officer, appears almost every day in all the periodicals of the U.S.S.R. ; at least three days out of four. You find him in all the magazines. Open *Soviet Photo*, *Soviet Sports*, *Soviet Medicine*, *Soviet Philately*, any one of these small weeklies that nobody thumbs through outside of the barber's or the dentist's ; portrait of the Leader, quotations from the Leader, commentaries on his luminous thought as applied to philately, to photography, to sports, to hygiene. Works of philosophy, history, literary criticism, sociology, are set up the same way.

The writer Avdeyenko, in a speech delivered at the Writers' Congress in 1935, broadcast by wireless and reprinted by the entire Soviet Press, repeats with every phrase, "Thanks, Stalin !"—"Thanks, for I feel well ; thanks, for I am joyous ; thanks, for . . ." and ends by saying : "My wife expects a child, the first word that our child shall pronounce will be the name of Stalin !" And the writers applaud, thunderous applause ! In the hall are four prominent writers. They also applaud, I have no doubt. It is only ludicrous and the writers in question have sufficient reasons for endorsing a little of the ludicrous with good will.

But here is something heart-rending : peasants of *colkhozes* where the famine has just ended—the Government having finally decided to leave them something to eat this year—write to the beloved Leader to thank him for such good living. As I read it, I see the

dismal destitution in which the peasants live. I see a troop of emaciated Cossacks stop before a cinema, in an odour of rancid boots. They are delegates to a local conference. A new film is to be shown for them and it just happens to be *The Peasants*, in which the members of a *colkhoz* guzzle until they are gorged. And the screen shows this to members of *colkhozes* who, themselves, fill up on food only on State occasions, three or four times a year. You also see a lovely young peasant girl, sleeping and dreaming of happiness : she is quietly crossing a park, pushing her baby-carriage, and a high official, in his long military great-coat, accompanies her at a vigorous pace. . . . O felicity, to have a child by him !

And here is something that becomes odious. On the occasion of a congress meeting in Moscow in mid-winter, in 1934–35, it was decided to make an ascent into the stratosphere, in order to beat the American and Belgian records and, from the depths of the azure, to send a wireless message of devotion to the gifted Leader. It was sheer madness. The cold of 60° produced the inevitable catastrophe. The stratonauts suffered a frightful death, for they fell for almost a quarter of an hour. . . . The Leader himself brought their urns to the Red Square, and he had 10,000 roubles given to the families. And the Press published a letter signed by the widows, the orphans, and the relatives which thanked him for *his great kindness*. From that time on, it became a custom. The survivors of catastrophes thanked him on all occasions for the kindness which his love heaps upon the people.

The gifted Leader enjoys, it goes without saying, power over life. It is up to him, it likewise goes without saying, to choose his eventual successor. Should it please him, tomorrow, to proclaim his power and his genius hereditary in his family, who will oppose it ? An evolution is thus taking place before our eyes that permits us better to understand how the Roman republic of Brutus became the empire of the divine

Augustus, and the republic of the Phrygian bonnet the Napoleonic Empire.

> We want no condescending saviours
> To rule us from a judgment hall ;
> We workers ask not for their favours :
> Let us consult for all.

These words of the "International", inspired by the rightful distrust of the workers towards great personages who, as a rule, serve the working-class only in order to be served by it and to betray it, are in profound harmony with socialist thought on one of the points where its scientific contribution is incontestable. Marxism has greatly reduced the role of the individual in history. We know today that there are no saviours ; we readily leave to the apologists of the old régime the history of the "forty kings who made France in a thousand years". We know that the destiny of communities is dominated by their conditions of existence, dependent, in the last analysis, upon economic factors. This new idea of the interdependent relations of the individual, of masses, of interests, of events, is just as important an element of the modern mind, in short, as the idea of the sphericity of the earth. To abandon it deliberately, as the bureaucratic reaction does, is to turn European thought several centuries backward—and morals just as much !

This should be the moment to evoke once more the exemplary simplicity of Lenin. I see him scribbling notes on his knee, at the foot of a tribune at the congress . . . crossing the Kremlin court, dressed in his well-brushed coat with its mended sleeves . . . mingling with the foreign delegates in a hall of Smolny. . . . And I think of how any hare-brained person who took it into his head to give him any "gifted Leader" would have appeared mad to us and would have made him burst out with that great jovial laugh that was perhaps his best defence against imbeciles and knaves.

PART THREE

The Political Evolution

(1917-36)

I

FROM SOVIET DEMOCRACY TO . . . (1917–23)

LET us recall the great dates and the great ideas. At the beginning, the dictatorship of the proletariat announces itself to the world as "a superior type of democracy". In place of bourgeois democracy, purely formal because it rests upon the economic subjection and exploitation of the workers, the régime of the Soviets or of the Council of Workers' Deputies freely elected in the factories sets up a genuine democracy, because economic privilege no longer exists. Deprived of political rights are only the expropriated owners, to whose manifest interest it is to provoke the subversion of a still poorly assured régime.

That is the ideal charter of the October Revolution, time and again proclaimed by Lenin, consecrated by congresses, made organic law by the Constitution of 1918. The revolution summons to political life, in a State such as never existed before, the masses themselves only yesterday oppressed and deprived of all power.

It is worth while tracing to their roots the causes of the defeat of Soviet democracy. Neither the Russian people's lack of preparation in liberty nor its ignorance appears to me to have been of decisive importance. In many circumstances the workers and the peasants, sometimes illiterate, proved to be amply capable of organizing and governing themselves. The absence of workers' organizations, primarily of trade unions, was certainly a negative factor. But the principal causes of the defeat lay outside the new system.

The normal functioning of an ensemble of institutions of vast scope and complexity—soviets, executive committeees of soviets, congresses, All-Russian Executive Committee, factory committees, etc. (the problem was to facilitate the political activity of thousands of workers)—presupposed, in the absence of a revolutionary upsurge, the existence of peace, of security, of a level of well-being that would permit a free, variegated, rich, constant political life at home, translated into countless initiatives. But it was precisely in this hour that mortal danger imposed upon the republic the régime of an entrenched camp, defended —in the front line—by a phalanx of conscious and resolute revolutionists in whose hands the dictatorship was to be the decisive weapon. Let us note that until that moment nobody had formulated the theory which was to acquire the force of law later on, according to which the dictatorship of the proletariat is naturally exercised by the Communist Party. As to the theory—life will impose it.*

Far from that, the Soviet Constitution implied no monopoly of power. "The Soviet power alone", Lenin had said from 1917 on, "would assure the broad and steady development of the revolution and the peaceful competition of the parties within the soviets."† The Bolsheviks did indeed intend to retain political hegemony, but this was to be the result primarily of the correctness of their policy. Lenin defined as follows the characteristics of the commune-State, a profoundly new proletarian State, inspired by the example of the Paris Commune :

1. The source of power does not lie in law, deliberated and promulgated by parliament, but in the direct initiative of the popular masses, a local initiative taken from below. . . .

2. The police and the Army, institutions distinct from the people and opposed to the people, are replaced by the arming of the people. . . .

3. The functionaries are replaced by the people itself or are, at the very least, under its control ; they are named by election and may be recalled at any moment by their constitutents. . . .‡

Without leaving the shop, subject to recall at any

* Victor Serge, *L'An I de la Révolution*, p. 331. Paris, 1930.

† V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XXI, p. 171, French ed.

‡ V. I. Lenin, *The Duality of Power*, April 1917. See Victor Serge, *Lenine* 1917. Paris, 1924.

time, the deputies to the soviets debated general policy, applied the laws and the decrees, administered in their commissions the town or the district, designated the delegates to the congresses which, thanks to a somewhat complicated system, it is true, formed the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Soviets and of the Government. In the All-Russian Congress of the Soviets, the representation of the workers was five times larger than that of the peasants (one deputy for 25,000 city inhabitants or 125,000 rural inhabitants ; in reality the hegemony of the proletariat was complete).

Refuting his adversaries, Lenin exclaimed : "Yes, we do not admit equality between the workers and the peasants, and you who defend such equality are the partisans of Kolchak. . . ." (Kolchak was then organizing the counter-revolution in Siberia.) "The vote of a single worker is worth several peasant votes. You will say that this is unjust ? No, it is just, just for the epoch in which the question is to crush capital. I do not know where you take your notions of justice. From your capitalist experiences of yesterday, no doubt ! The proprietor, his equality, his freedom—there are your notions of justice. They are the remnants of your petty-bourgeois prejudices ; all our justice, our equality are subordinated to the interests of the destruction of capitalism. . . ." These interests demanded the hegemony of the working-class in relation to the peasants attached to private property.

In the midst of the proletarian revolution, the civil war brings about little by little the disappearance of democratic liberties. It would be necessary to sketch here a picture of those terrible years, to show the revolution hemmed in by its foes, undermined at home by Vendées, by conspiracies, by sabotage, by famine, by the disorganization of transports, by epidemics, by schisms, to show the conflict between the battling vanguard of the working-class and its backward elements, the least conscious and most

selfish, those least inclined to sacrifices demanded by the general interest. The misfortune of the dissident parties or groups in those times is that their opposition runs the risk of rallying these discouraged rearguards who are ready unconsciously to second a counter-revolution.

In 1919, the social democrats (Mensheviks) and left social revolutionaries attempt a general strike in famished Petrograd, threatened from two sides by the Whites, in the factories which all the revolutionists have left ! It may be that there was some justice in their criticisms, but in those circumstances their policy was suicidal : suicide for the revolution if a general strike of backward workers paralyses it ; suicide for the party which has undertaken this criminal enterprise, if it fails. By virtue of similar struggles, the social democrats lose the benefit of legality, which is nevertheless rendered to them a little later when they seem to orient themselves with a little more revolutionary common sense. It was necessary in 1918 to disarm the anarchist Black Guards in Moscow, whom their own general staff was no longer responsible for. . . . The right social revolutionaries had fomented the counter-revolution, together with the Czechoslovakian troops, in the Volga region. The left social revolutionaries, in July 1918, had attempted—and failed in—a *coup de force* in order to seize the power and reopen the war against Germany.

These are the struggles which bring about the suppression of the parties in the Soviet régime, and this suppression will become complete only with the advent of the bureaucratic régime. In the years of the greatest peril, the soviets and the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets include left social revolutionaries (who were part of the Government during the first nine months), Maximalists, anarchists, Menshevik social democrats, and even right social revolutionaries—the latter unalterable enemies of

the new power. Far from fearing discussion, Lenin seeks after it, having Martov and Dan, who had been expelled from the All-Russian Executive, invited to come there to take the floor. He feels that he has something to learn from their merciless criticism.

The Bolshevik Party, known for the firmness of its discipline, owed it more to the unity of its doctrine than to constraint. Democratic centralization—that is, a strongly centralized leadership, democratically elected and supported by a party democratic at its base—implied a wide freedom of discussion and the strictest discipline in action. At the time of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, Lenin was in a minority in the Central Committee. In the moments when the leadership of the party escaped him, Lenin threatened to resign from the Central Committee, in order to resume his freedom of agitation in the ranks, among the militants.

In 1918, the left communists, led by Bukharin and Radek, could be seen forming an Opposition which prepared openly for a split and negotiated secretly with certain left social revolutionaries over the arrest of Lenin. This Opposition published periodicals and held meetings. Since it was animated by good faith, there was neither a split nor sanctions, the events having modified the policy and the situation of the party. The Opposition was reabsorbed. The democratic customs of the party will give way in 1919 and in the years to follow to the state of mobilization necessitated by war communism. In order to strengthen itself and to find men, the party recruits without having the time to educate ; the civil war does not leave it an hour of respite and everything must be organized in an entrenched camp gripped by famine.

The conflict between the advanced and the backward elements of the proletariat also finds its expression within the party, and it must be purged incessantly of adventurers and profiteers ; it is harder

to clean out the petty *parvenus*, who are neither ostentatious adventurers nor profiteers, who are often good labour fighters and whose number begins to grow apace. They begin the conquest of the State without knowing it. The routines of the old régime, abolished in the institutions, are still very powerful in their minds ; and so they bring along little of the socialist spirit into the offices that are called upon to direct everything. . . .

From 1920 on, the bureaucratic evil makes itself felt. The defeat of the commune-State can be clearly perceived. The *Workers' Opposition* (Shliapnikov and Alexandra Kollontay) denounces the peril at the time, at about the same period as does Miaznikov and the group of the *Workers' Truth*, as well as the Paniushkin group which will endeavour to found a new Communist Party in Moscow (1922). These oppositions come to grief. Their protests coincide with waves of uprisings in the country, with the peak of the famine, with the terrible episode of Kronstadt, with the crisis—in a word, with war communism which is no longer lifeworthy. It rests upon requisitions in the country, the complete handling of production and distribution by the State, feeding by categories, in the cities, so as to be able to provide first for the needs of the workers.

In nationalizing everything in order to shatter all resistance, too much has been nationalized All this is well known, for they had wanted to follow other paths. By misfortune, Lenin's clear-sightedness is defective this time, he doesn't see the possibility of quitting the road of war communism without surrendering to the rural counter-revolution. Trotsky, crossing the country in every direction, has more contact with the masses, especially in the countryside, and beginning with February 1920, upon returning from the Urals, he proposes replacing the requisitioning system with a sort of tax in kind—that is, the pacification of the countryside by means of a new

economic policy.* Faced with the defeat of his proposal in the Central Committee, he will seek other solutions, not quite so happy.

The uprisings of Kronstadt and Tambov bring the republic to the brink of ruin at the beginning of 1921, and Lenin, the evidence before him, has adopted the tax in kind for the peasants and the totality of the measures which were called the N.E.P. —the New Economic Policy : freedom of small trade (monopoly of grain), concessions to foreign capitalists, encouragement to artisans ; in a word, compromise with the agrarians.

The question of political freedom is raised from two different aspects. It is not a question of giving the counter-revolution facilities of agitation on the shifting terrain of the N.E.P., but of curbing the growing bureaucratization of the State and of giving the floor to the revolutionary proletariat organized in the party, the only party that powerfully survived the tests of the civil war, the only party to which, despite its errors, the revolution owes both victory and life.

The last years of Lenin are to be tragically haunted by these preoccupations. "Our State", he says, "is a workers' and peasants' State with bureaucratic deformations." How reform it ? How cure it ? Lenin, ill, exerts his expiring strength in seeking means of reform. A sort of anguish pierces through his last declarations. "The machine is slipping out of your hands, one would say that somebody else is steering it, it runs in a different direction from the one set for it . . ." (Speech of March 29, 1922, at the Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party.) "If we consider Moscow with its 4700 responsible communists and the whole bureaucratic machine, which of the two leads the other ? The truth is that the communists do not lead, they are led."

He proposes to Trotsky to join hands in order to

* See Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 464.

combat at the top of the party the bureaucratic core already crystallized around Stalin. He proposes the expulsion for two years of Ordjonikidze, who distinguished himself in the Caucasus by his dictatorial behaviour. He writes his study on the Workers' Inspection, called upon to become an organ of permanent struggle against the bureaucracy—but at the head of which is immediately placed a proper bureaucrat who resorts to base stratagems to deceive Lenin, glued to his invalid's chair, going to the point of proposing not to print his articles but to publish for his eyes alone an issue of *Pravda* containing them. In the document which has been called his Testament, Lenin urges that Stalin, "rude and disloyal", be relieved of his functions as General Secretary. The last letter he writes is a letter of rupture with Stalin, who thenceforth becomes the master of the party apparatus, in other words the most representative personage of the rising bureaucracy.*

The Opposition of 1923 reawakens the party for a moment. Trotsky gives it a charter in demanding in his articles a "new course" within the ranks of the party. Let us translate: the return to democratic morals, the freedom of tendencies in order to avert the formation of factions, the floor to the youth. The youth of the universities, the communist cadres of the Red Army and of the Cheka support this programme. The Central Committee, led by a secret faction at whose head stand Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin—"the unshakable triumvirate", Zinoviev will soon say—manœuvres, publishes a very democratic resolution which will never be applied, brutally purges the universities, and even dangles the spectre of a military plot, for Trotsky is still the head of the Supreme War Council. The death of Lenin on January

* In addition to Trotsky's autobiography, fruitful consultation can be made of Boris Souvarine's *Staline* and Max Eastman's *Since Lenin Died*. A Russian counter-revolutionary savant has made an honest choice and translation of Lenin's works from 1917 to 1923: *Lenine, La Révolution bolcheviste, traduit par Serge Oldenbourg*, Paris, 1931.

21, 1924, seems to soften the debate by a vast mourning. In reality, the Opposition is already beaten, the bureaucratic coterie is consolidating all its positions.

There has been no little retrospective comment on this defeat. Some go so far as to reproach Trotsky for not having resorted at the time to a *coup de force*, the success of which would have been likely, given his popularity and the attitude of the military circles. This means forgetting that socialism and workers' democracy cannot be born out of *pronunciamientos*. It is to the merit of the revolutionist that he refuses to take to this road, so tempting to all the ambitious. However, the explanation of the defeat of the Opposition of 1923 is to be sought neither in the indisposition of Trotsky, who was out of the fighting in the most critical days, nor in his repugnance for the *coup de force*. The Marxist discerns it without difficulty in deeper and more general causes.

At no point in its history can the socialist revolution which unfolded in Russia be considered apart from the international labour movement. The Russian party and the Third International were already very much dulled and stiffened at the joints in 1923; not sufficiently, however, for the Russian proletariat not to be roused to boundless hope during the revolutionary crisis through which Germany was passing. The Russians were ready to support the German revolution. Without much secrecy, Trotsky saw to the adoption of preparatory measures necessary for an entirely effective supporting action. Russian militants took part in the preparation of the abortive insurrection in Saxony. They noted at the Chemnitz conference that the Communist Party of Germany was not prepared in the technical sense.

The vanguard of the German proletariat asked only to fight for socialism against a bourgeoisie whose bankruptcy was striking; the masses would have followed, the general situation seemed clearly favourable, but there was a lack of arms and the cadres of

the party weren't worth much. In point of fact, the bureaucratization of the International compromised everything. The social-democratic president, Ebert, gave full dictatorial powers to General von Seeckt. The Communist Party was dissolved without resistance. There was nothing more than a short street battle in Hamburg, where the countermanding order did not arrive in time. Since the end of the World War, this was the third defeat, conclusive for a whole epoch, of the European revolution. (The German proletariat had been vanquished by arms in 1918–19; in Italy the preventive counter-revolution has recently brought Mussolini to power.)

In Russia the repercussions of this defeat were to be very grave. The hope of breaking the iron circle within which the soviets were suffocating had galvanized the last efforts of the generation of October. The defeat of Chemnitz-Hamburg signified for it a lasting isolation, increased economic difficulties, a moral depression, the weakening of the internationalist revolutionary tendencies, the strengthening of bureaucratic nationalistic, moderating tendencies. . . .

The conquest of the socialist State by the bureaucracy is to be explained above all else by the defeat of the workers' revolution in Central Europe.

II

. . . THE ADVENT OF THE BUREAUCRACY (1924–27)

UPON the death of Lenin, the bureaux carry out a stroke worthy of a genius. A publicity campaign, turning to profit the deep emotion evoked by the disappearance of Old Ilych, brings into the party 240,000 workers which raises its membership from 351,000 to 591,000. What are these new communists worth? They had not come to Lenin during his lifetime. They had stayed on the outside of the party during the civil war. Now they are coming to the embalmed Lenin, to the strong power, to a restored, stable order which no longer requires sacrifices and which even promises benefits. The spiritual atmosphere of Russia changes at a single stroke in 1924, while a mausoleum is built at the foot of the Kremlin wall for the mummy of Lenin. Marxian thought congeals into verbal repetitions; formulae must be stereotyped so that their content vanishes, and Leninism, invented yesterday, solemnly substitutes for the revolutionary Marxism of Lenin its grubbing into texts—presently bowdlerized—its verbal violence, its oaths, its deformations, its bigotry.

A short time ago the party numbered 50,000 workers and 300,000 functionaries in its total of 350,000 members. It was no longer a workers' party, but a party of workers-turned-functionary. A quarter of a million backward workers have just been admitted. The appearance of the statistics is altered and it can now be asserted that the party is once more a workers' party. In any case, it is no longer a party of the vanguard, but rather that of the rearguard. Since

the functionaries retain all the commanding levers in it, we are obliged to define it : a mass party of backward workers led by *parvenu* bureaucrats.* In the rank-and-file organizations, the militants who have passed through the period of illegal action under the old régime, the true guardians of the Bolshevik tradition, are now reduced to such an infinitesimal number that they no longer count numerically ; those who participated actively in the revolution now constitute only a tiny percentage.†

Now the question of Lenin's succession stands before this sick party. Naturally it is a question of a purely spiritual succession. Lenin was neither a party president, a general secretary, nor a proclaimed leader ; just a member of the Central Committee, and chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, prime minister of the revolution, his personal influence was that of a moral and intellectual superiority, so well acknowledged that there was no need of imposing it. His simplicity as a militant, the rectitude of his socialist spirit made him ever intolerant of sycophancy.

One single person could, by virtue of the magnificence of services rendered and of an incontestable superiority, lay claim to his succession : Trotsky.

* Stalin and his leading gang know this so well that they denounce as criminal Trotsky's proposal to institute the secret ballot for the selection of the organizations' bureaux. "You would like", they reply, "to accord the counter-revolution an easy victory in the party."

† Some time later, in 1928, I described the situation as follows, in a letter to Jacques Mesnil :

"Basically, what is happening—leaving aside the economic roots of the problem (they are clearly visible, I believe, even from afar)—boils down to this : the elimination of one generation by another. Those who made the revolution are removed by those who are rising. The new generation did not know the class struggle in its clear and direct forms, nor the yoke of the old régime. On the contrary, it has been told time and again that it was victorious and it ends by believing it, without the slightest way of getting the idea that it thus renders itself capable of gaining a victory over itself—the condition of all progress. Nor did it go through the civil war, and it knows nothing about the heroism of the war or about its leaders. Everything we went through before, the difficult and perilous working-out of convictions, the tempering of the militant by devotion and individual effort, the courage of being in a minority, scrupulous theoretical intelligence, revolutionary lyricism—all these things are alien to it. It is fed an official science, it has an over-simplified, avid, and practical mentality of the *parvenu* on the make. It naturally distorts the

Lenin had, so to speak, recommended him before his own departure. But he did not belong to the coterie of the Old Bolsheviks, which had been discussing Lenin's ideas for fourteen years, from 1903 to 1917; in addition—and this was the most serious point—he had made himself the promoter of the new course against the bureaucracy. When the passive and wearied masses are silent, personal intrigues can acquire capital importance. Two men solicit—against Trotsky—the succession of Lenin: Zinoviev, in the front ranks, aloud, and Stalin, half concealed, behind the scenes. Zinoviev, the closest of Lenin's collaborators since the beginnings of the party, president of the Petrograd Soviet, chairman of the Communist International, a remarkable agitator, somewhat vulgar in tone, of whom it may be said that he was Lenin's greatest mistake. Stalin, an old Georgian militant, little known to the party, unknown to the masses, firm in character, Oriental in mind, limited, alert, and tricky, had long been boring from within the Army and had converted the General Secretariat of the party, once the post for carrying out decisions, into a secret post of command. His tireless activity consisted in placing his creatures everywhere. His

---

clearest ideas as its interests dictate, ready to retain the old prestige-labels so long as they cover something new. Since heredity weighs down, since the country is one of small peasant property, since the pressure of the capitalist encirclement is enormous—the attempts to deny it are ludicrous—you now have a whole new potential bourgeoisism, latent but already pushing upward and even flourishing in places, and infinitely skilful in its disguises. I am intimately acquainted with writers, with intellectuals, who are, at bottom, our mortal enemies, whose anti-socialist convictions have the firmness of rock: their professions are made in Marxian terms, they remove heretics from editorial staffs. . . . And they understand quite well what they are doing. Their whole problem lies in staying on for a few years and then the game is theirs.

"This process has overtaken the party. Here is the membership proportion of a cell that I know well: 400 members, 20 of whom go back to August 1921, and 3 or 4 to August 1917. Consequently, 380 against 20 came over not to the militant or the painful revolution, but to the power, and after the N.E.P. Two elements must be discerned there: men of mature age—they deliberately refrained from joining before the N.E.P. That's clear enough. And the young: they know neither capitalism nor the civil war, and the creator of a Red Army built out of nothing has less prestige in their eyes than the minister of the hour."

political flair lay in translating with great practical skill the aspirations of the *parvenus* of the revolution.

To impair the popularity of Trotsky it was necessary to invent a whole ideology—Trotskyism—the baneful antipode of Leninism. One of the Old Bolsheviks who did this melancholy job of falsifying history and ideas, Kamenev, was later to speak of it to Trotsky with the most unrestrained cynicism. The totalitarian State put in operation all its means of repression. The Press was inundated with anti-Trotskyist copy. The libraries filled up with works dishonestly or untalentedly written to suit the occasion, but overwhelming and misleading by virtue of the power of sheer mass, impudence, and monotony. Editions were printed by the millions. The communist parties abroad were broken if they showed any hesitation to condemn Trotskyism. The destruction of the first cadres of the Communist International began with the most important party, the French, from which its earliest militants, like Souvarine, Monatte, and Rosmer, were eliminated by the worst kind of measures. It was the epoch of the "rapid and complete" Bolshevization of the parties of the C.I. (theses of Béla Kun) ; of the extreme concentration of the C.I. as the "single world party" (Zinoviev) ; and, inside the parties, of the totalitarian régime. The officially sanctified phrases were "monolithic" organizational structure and "100 per cent approval" by the members of the policy of the leaders. The bureaucratic machine was approaching perfection.

Towards 1926 the situation clears up ; Trotskyism is beaten. Trotsky, ousted from the leading organs, is silent. The International vegetates after the bloody defeats in Estonia and Bulgaria. Zinoviev, the first personage of the Political Bureau, flattered by the periodicals, welcomed at functionaries' meetings with frenzied ovations, appears to be thrusting himself into Lenin's place. He is neither a great political mind nor a genuine leader, nor even a scrupulous

militant in his relations with the masses and the party—far, indeed, from that. Nevertheless, he is a Bolshevik bureaucrat sincerely attached to revolutionary internationalism. The gradual conquest of the party apparatus having been achieved by his coterie, Stalin lies in wait for Zinoviev there, at the turning-point of the latent crisis of the régime.

In 1926–27 production reaches approximately the pre-War level, with an increased population. A fine achievement, when you bear in mind that it was attained after terrible ravages, and by a new class, only yesterday exploited and ignorant and suddenly called upon to manage the whole economic life of a vast country. Industry, very weak, only imperfectly assures the supply of manufactured articles to the country. The peasants begin to enrich themselves, after paying their taxes, by accumulating grain reserves. There are almost a million registered unemployed, and almost a billion poods of grain—worth about a billion gold roubles—in the granaries of the wealthy peasants. Themselves responsible for the difficulties of the internal policy, Zinoviev and Kamenev discover that an embryonic bourgeoisie is in the process of formation: wealthy peasants, traders, speculators, functionaries and well-remunerated specialists.

At the Fourteenth Congress of the party, a struggle, as sudden as it is bewildering, starts raging between the Leningrad organization (Zinoviev) and the rest of the congress, prepared by the General Secretariat. Stalin wins hands down, reorganizes the Central Committee and the Political Bureau, and, while he allows his now impotent opponents to remain in these bodies, he installs himself strongly in power. "It is the equivalent of the lifetime Consulate—the irremovable secretariat. In five years Stalin has carried out his molecular *coup d'état*" (B. Souvarine). From now on, a Soviet witticism well explains the chain of victories of the bureaucratic apparatus. A worker asks his shopmate if it is true that the latter, a party

member, sympathizes with the Opposition. "Says you," replies the other. "I've got a wife and kids!" Burdened with a family, the average communist has no desire whatsoever to be dispatched suddenly, after the slightest manifestation of opinion, to the cold regions of Northern Russia or the hot ones of Central Asia (on an assigned mission, of course). He learns to keep his mouth closed.

The party is virtually finished. The old directors of the revolution should not have been unaware of it. But some, like Zinoviev, are caught in their own phrases before being strangled by the bureaucratic machine which they have set up, and others, like Trotsky, think that even if there is only one chance in a hundred of obtaining an internal rectification, it ought to be tried. From the point of view of the superior interests of the proletariat, the latter are undeniably correct. What a demoralizing effect it would have had on the labour movement of every country to see a bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet régime, without a struggle taking place against it, without opposition, without the sacrifice of the best!

In 1927 an unexpected regrouping is observed which would be incomprehensible anywhere else, except as denoting the sorriest lack of political scruples. Yesterday's inventors and the persecutors of Trotskyism, Zinoviev and Kamenev, turn to Trotsky, offer him their alliance, acknowledge that he was right against them, eulogize his revolutionary probity and, together with him, demand the new course in the party. A common platform of the new Opposition is signed by Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Piatakov, Bakayev, Yevdokimov, Smilga, Preobrazhensky. The document denounces the danger which the revolution risks from the formation of a new bourgeoisie (the *kulak*, the Nepman, and the bureaucrat: the wealthy peasant, the tradesman, and the functionary). It criticizes the moderate pace of industrialization which deepens the gulf between the proletarian cities and

the country—industry, too weak, being unable to satisfy the needs of the agrarians. It advocates the revision of the ridiculously curtailed Five-Year Plans proposed by the bureaucracy. It denounces the capture of the party by the bureaux and of the bureaux by the Stalin faction, and demands the return to internal democracy. In the realm of doctrine, a big debate is opened between the nationalist conception of socialism (Stalin: "Socialism in a single country") and socialist internationalism, which assumes its clearest form in the theory of the permanent revolution formulated by Trotsky. This theory regards the socialist revolution, even when it triumphs for the time being in an isolated country, as essentially international and constituting a continuous process, whose forms may be modified, which may know periods of calm, but which cannot interrupt itself until the international victory of the proletariat.*

---

* From Trotsky's book, *The Permanent Revolution*: "Marxism proceeds from world economy, not as a sum of national parts, but as a mighty, independent reality, which is created by the international division of labour and the world market, and, in the present epoch, predominates over the national markets. The productive forces of capitalist society have long ago grown beyond the national frontier. . . . To attempt, regardless of the geographic, cultural, and historical conditions of the country's development, which constitutes a part of the world whole, to realize a fenced-in proportionality of all the branches of economy within national limits, means to pursue a reactionary utopia" (p. ix). "The permanent revolution, in the sense which Marx attached to the conception, means a revolution which makes no compromise with any form of class rule, which does not stop at the democratic stage, which goes over to socialist measures and to war against the reaction from without, that is, a revolution whose every next stage is anchored in the preceding one and which can only end in the complete liquidation of all class society" (p. xxxii). "The maintenance of the proletarian revolution within a national framework can only be a provisional state of affairs, even though, as the experience of the Soviet Union shows, one of long duration. In an isolated proletarian dictatorship, the internal and external contradictions grow inevitably, together with the growing successes. Remaining isolated, the proletarian State must finally become a victim of these contradictions. The way out for it lies only in the victory of the proletariat of the advanced countries. Viewed from this standpoint a national revolution is not a self-sufficient whole; it is only a link in the international chain. The international revolution presents a permanent process, in spite of all fleeting rises and falls" (p. xxxv). "Internationalism is no abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of world economy, of the world development of productive forces, and the world scale of the class struggle" (ibid.). (New York, 1931.)

It would have been proper, in this connection, to recall that clear phrase of Lenin's : "Our salvation lies in the European revolution." (Speech at the Seventh Congress of the Soviets, in 1918.) If the German revolution, that is, the socialist revolution in a country provided with a more advanced industrial basis and a more numerous proletariat, had required the sacrifice of the Russian revolution, Lenin judged that this sacrifice would have had to be consented to.* An honest glance backward would suffice to convince one that the Soviet Federated Republics owed everything to the Western proletariat, hence to the permanence and the international character of the workers' action, and that its vicissitudes reflected at once the world economic conjuncture and the situation of the workers in the other countries. Was it not in Berlin, Vienna, Glasgow, Paris, Toulon, *throughout the world*, that the military intervention had collapsed because the proletarians refused to fight against their Russian brothers ?

But from the dominant side in the debate, honesty of any kind, either intellectual or otherwise, is inadmissible. Whoever has lived through those moments will never forget the nightmare. It is inexpressibly dejecting to breathe lies, to see all reason perverted, to hear every word pronounced distorted ; in brief, to witness the beclouding of the social consciousness. The fact that it was deliberate is a sign of tragic gravity. The truth was not at all in question. It was power alone that was involved, and the more unluckily false the position of those who held the power, the greater the conflict between their policy and their own declarations, the more violently they had to distort the image of all things. In order to complete the conquest of the workers' State, the bureaucracy first had to impose its national socialism, its new conventional lies, its falsifications of doctrine.

* Victor Serge, *L'An I de la Révolution russe*, pp. 388 *et seq.*, also p. 235.