

# The Moscow Trials As Evidence

Grover Furr



“Grover Furr moves with perfect ease with the Russian language and Russian archives. Without being intimidated by political correctness his research and documentation are precise, patient, meticulous.

- Professor Domenico Losurdo, University of Urbino, Italy.



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Trials testimony is evidence. It can and must be evaluated as a source like all evidence should be. All evidence must be evaluated according to objective criteria, a process often called source criticism. This applies to the Moscow Trials testimony no more and no less than to all other evidence used in any kind of research, from scientific to historical. “ - from Chapter One.





# **The Moscow Trials As Evidence**

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\* \* \* \* \*

## Dedication

This book is dedicated to Marcela, Shaka, Carmen, and Naima.



# Chapter 1. The Moscow Trials As Evidence

Our task in this short book is to determine the reliability of the confessions and statements – the fact-claims – made by defendants at the three Moscow Trials of 1936, 1937, and 1938 by comparing those fact-claims with other, independent evidence.

## Source Criticism of Evidence

When confronted with a body of testimony like the Moscow Trials transcripts we need to figure out how to deal with it. The Moscow Trials testimony is evidence. It can and must be evaluated as a source like all evidence should be. All evidence must be evaluated according to objective criteria, a process often called source criticism. This applies to the Moscow Trials testimony no more and no less than to all other evidence used in any kind of research, from scientific to historical.

One objective procedure, in this and in all such cases, is to begin by studying the Moscow Trials testimony carefully, reading it many times. This is done very rarely if at all. The logical fallacy at play here is that of *petitio principii* – in plain English, “begging the question,” or “assuming that which must be proven, not assumed.” The fact is this: there is not now nor has there ever been any *evidence* that the Moscow Trials defendants were in reality innocent, compelled or persuaded by some means (threats to them or against their families, loyalty to the Party, etc.) to testify falsely.

This false assumption and logical fallacy result from, are in service to and under the domination of, what I have called the “anti-Stalin paradigm.” Under its influence the Moscow Trials testimony is declared to be false *a priori*, without any attempt to evaluate it, to subject it to source criticism in the same way as all historical evidence should be evaluated.



Years of study have convinced me that the reason for this striking failure on the part of generations of historians of the Stalin period Soviet history is – fear. If the Moscow Trials transcripts were shown to be reliable as evidence, the “anti-Stalin paradigm” of Soviet history – and therefore of world history – would be dismantled, with consequences for the dominant paradigm of world history too.

This would be unacceptable to the controlling authorities in the field of Soviet history, who are closely tied to political authorities in many countries because of the hostility between the communist movement and the capitalist powers. The field of Soviet history itself was instituted in the West to be in service to the political project of discrediting and destroying the communist movement.

There is no other way to account for the nonsense that dominates in the field of Soviet history of the Stalin period and about the person of Joseph Stalin himself – for example, the common lapse by experienced scholars into well-known logical fallacies, unsupported and unquestioned assumptions, assertions without proof, the language of vituperation and moral condemnation – except by attributing it to the overwhelming ideological influence of the obligatory “anti-Stalin paradigm.”

The Moscow Trials are routinely *regarded* as fabrications concocted by the NKVD investigators, the Soviet Prosecution, and ultimately by Stalin. It is generally *assumed* that the defendants confessed to crimes that they did not commit; that the confessions were forced upon them, dictated, or scripted; that the innocent defendants were forced to falsely testify by threats of some kind against themselves or their families. Because there has long been a “consensus” that the Moscow Trials were fabrications and the testimony given there is false, the more than 1500 pages of the trial transcripts have been little studied and seldom even read.

Once the Trials transcripts have been studied carefully, the next step should be to compare the contents with other evidence now



available in order to determine whether the trials testimony can be either confirmed or contradicted by other evidence.

## Source Criticism of the Moscow Trials Testimony

In this and in all source criticism the student must begin by studying the evidence, beginning by reading it carefully and repeatedly. We must attempt to determine the reliability of the Moscow Trials testimony to see whether some of the fact-claims contained in it can be verified in other sources that are independent of it. When a number of independent sources agree on the same fact-claim, the likelihood that the fact-claim is true increases dramatically. If we can verify a number of fact-claims made by Moscow Trials defendants through independent sources, then we have established that the Moscow Trials testimony should be considered to be legitimate evidence. This is the process we have undertaken to carry out in the first section of the present book.

A few scholars who believe in the “prosecution-fabrication” theory and have studied parts, at least, of the testimony have seriously distorted that testimony in an attempt to force it to fit the Procrustean bed of the “anti-Stalin paradigm”. In the 1960s and 1970s Stephen F. Cohen studied Nikolai Bukharin’s testimony in the Third Moscow Trial of March 1938. Cohen proposed a novel conclusion: that Bukharin had confessed only in very general terms to crimes that he did not specify but had refused to confess to any specific crimes.

Some years ago Vladimir Bobrov and I studied Cohen’s argument and evidence. In our article we demonstrate that Cohen is completely incorrect. In his trial testimony Bukharin did indeed confess to a number of very serious and, the important point here, very specific crimes. At the same trial Bukharin stubbornly proclaimed himself innocent of other very serious crimes with which the Prosecution charged him. We argued there that, under the influence of the predominant “anti-Stalin paradigm,” Cohen seriously misread Bukharin’s testimony. (Furr and Bobrov)



Yet Cohen's fallacious characterization of Bukharin's testimony has been widely accepted as accurate. Even Mikhail Gorbachev's Politburo commission appointed to study and to find evidence to support Gorbachev's predetermined decision to "rehabilitate" Bukharin was misled by Cohen's false conclusion. One of the commission members, P.N. Demichev, said:

Если вздуматься, он по сути дела от всего отказался.

Translated:

If we consider this carefully, in essence he [Bukharin] denied everything. (RKEB 3 40)

In 2010 Matthew Lenoe concluded that Genrikh Iagoda, another defendant in the Third Moscow Trial, later retracted the confessions that he had made prior to the trial and earlier in it. Our study of Lenoe's argument published in 2013 shows that Lenoe seriously misunderstood Iagoda's testimony, and that in fact Iagoda did not at all retract his confession of guilt. We concluded that Lenoe forced his conclusions into the predetermined framework of the anti-Stalin paradigm, seriously distorting Iagoda's testimony in the process. (Furr Kirov Ch. 15)

Cohen's and Lenoe's misreadings of the trial testimony can be best explained by the power of the anti-Stalin paradigm. *The fact is this: there is not now, nor has there ever been, any evidence that the Moscow Trials defendants were in reality innocent, compelled or persuaded by some means (threats to them or against their families, loyalty to the Party, etc.) to testify falsely.*

## The Role of Logical Fallacies

The out-of-hand rejection of the Moscow Trials testimony as evidence rests on the naïve acceptance of a number of logical fallacies. Among the most common are the following:

\* The Moscow Trials testimony has been *assumed* to be false. This is the fallacy of *petitio principii* – "begging the question," or



“assuming that which must be proven, not assumed.” No evidence, in any scientific inquiry, should ever be either accepted or rejected without critical examination.

\* The appeal to “expert” authority. The truth is never constituted by a “consensus of authorities or experts,” no matter how many of them there are, still less by the consensus of anticommunist and Trotskyist “authorities.”

This fallacy is similar to the “where there’s smoke there’s fire” or “hasty conclusion” fallacy where “what everybody knows” substitutes for evidence.

\* The argument from incredulity.<sup>1</sup> This takes the form: “The charges against the defendants at the Moscow Trials are absurd, therefore they are false (or more likely to be false).” This is equivalent to saying: “I *consider* these charges absurd, therefore they are false.” This is a statement about the person making the statement, not a statement about the charges in the Moscow Trials. Likewise, it would be invalid to say: “The charges against the defendants are credible, therefore they are true (or more likely to be true.)”

\* Another form this fallacy takes is the “failure to persuade”: “I am not persuaded by your argument, therefore it is wrong (or, more likely to be wrong, etc.).”

\* The argument from ignorance. This fallacy often takes the form: “This statement has not been proven to be true, therefore it is false (or “likely to be false,” or “therefore we can assume that it is false until proven otherwise.”)

\* The “*ad hominem*” argument. Like practitioners of any scientific inquiry historians are supposed to strive to be objective. Historians are supposed to be on guard against their own biases so as not to be swayed by them. Yet it is very common for historians

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see the discussion at [https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Argument\\_from\\_incredulity](https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Argument_from_incredulity)



of the Stalin period to continually apply derogatory moral terms to Stalin and other leading figures. Most historians of the Stalin period do not make any effort even to disguise their own bias and subjectivity, let alone to make allowances for it by adopting strategies to minimize the effects that their biases will have on their research.

\* The “demand for certainty.” A common form that lack of objectivity takes is the demand for “certainty.” For example, we have a great deal of circumstantial evidence that Leon Trotsky did in fact collaborate with German and Japanese intelligence. How can this evidence be accounted for, except to conclude that Trotsky did in fact collaborate? The most common form is denial. “There is no certainty, therefore it is false.”

\* “It might be a lie.” It is not a refutation of a fact-claim to state that it “might be a lie.” At any time any person might be deliberately lying; making false statements in good faith; or telling the truth. The same is true for any document. No evidence should be rejected because it “might be a lie.” Instead, the researcher must try to verify the fact-claims in the document as far as possible.

\* The “lack of material evidence.” Leon Trotsky was the first to state that the lack of material evidence at the Moscow Trials helped to disprove the charges. This argument has been repeated by many historians since.

The logic is patently false. Any police force capable of compelling seasoned revolutionaries to confess in open court to crimes they did not commit would also be able to forge incriminating documents and force the defendants to swear that they were genuine.

Moreover, in a conspiracy seasoned revolutionaries would either destroy incriminating documents or, more likely, would never commit their plans to paper in the first place. Therefore not the absence but the *presence* of substantive “material evidence” in a

case involving a serious conspiracy ought logically to raise suspicions of fakery.

## The Need For, and Lack of, Objectivity

Everybody has biases. But everybody can learn to be objective in studying any subject, whether it be physics or history. The techniques are basically similar. Objectivity as a scientific method is a practice of “distrust of the self.”<sup>2</sup> One can learn to be objective by training oneself to become aware of, to articulate, and then to doubt one’s own preconceived ideas. One must be automatically suspicious of evidence that tends to confirm one’s own preconceived ideas, prejudices, and preferences. One must learn to give an especially generous reading, to search especially hard for, to lean over backwards to consider, evidence and arguments that contradict one’s own preconceived ideas.

This is simply what every bourgeois detective in every detective story knows. As Sherlock Holmes said:

It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment. (Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*)

In other words: keep your mind free of precipitate conclusions. Get the facts before you form your hypotheses. Be ready to abandon a hypothesis that does not explain the established facts.

If one does not begin one’s research with a determined attempt to be objective, accompanied by definite strategies to minimize one’s own biases, then one cannot and will not discover the truth. Put colloquially: if you don’t start out to look for the truth you will not stumble across it by accident along the way, and what you do find will not be the truth.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News. A Social History of American Newspapers*. New York: Basic Books, 1978, 71.



This principle is well known. Therefore the real purpose of most research into Soviet history is *not* to discover the truth. Instead it is to arrive at politically acceptable conclusions and to disregard the evidence when that evidence does not support those politically acceptable conclusions. This is the “anti-Stalin paradigm.”

The fallacies cited above are widely known. How is it possible that they are so commonly applied to the Moscow Trials testimony by scholars and other educated persons? I believe this is due to the power of the “anti-Stalin paradigm.” Stalin has been so maligned by so many “experts” and for so long a time that many people believe “where there’s smoke, there’s fire” -- “there must be something to this.” This is all wrong.

There is no substitute for evidence. In this study we examine the evidence and draw conclusions from the evidence alone. This is the only rationally defensible way of proceeding, in history as in any other field of scientific investigation.

## Verifying the Moscow Trials Transcripts as Evidence

What’s the historian’s job? Many people would probably say: To find out what “really” happened, or what “probably” happened. I think this is the wrong question, leading to a wrong method.

What’s the “right question”? To formulate a hypothesis. To ask: “What hypothesis best accounts for the evidence that we have?”

Concerning the Moscow Trials testimony we have considered two possible hypotheses:

- \* The hypothesis that the Moscow Trials testimony is a fraud, a fabrication by the investigation and the prosecution.
- \* The hypothesis that the Moscow Trials testimony is what it purports to be; that the defendants testified as they chose to testify and were not forced to testify falsely.

I chose to test the second hypothesis because in the course of my research on Soviet history I had run across a lot of evidence that appeared consistent with it. I have never encountered any evidence that appeared consistent with the first hypothesis. Therefore it appeared to me that the second hypothesis would be more fruitful. I present the results of my study in this book.

*Every time we can check a statement made in Moscow Trials testimony against independent evidence, we find that the Moscow Trials testimony or charge is verified.* This means that we have no objective basis to reject the confessions made at the Moscow Trials as false or fabricated. And this means that the Moscow Trials testimony is in fact what it appears to be – evidence

I came to adopt this hypothesis in much the same way Stephen Jay Gould, in his essay “Dinosaur in a Haystack,” describes how his colleague Peter Ward decided to test the “Alvarez hypothesis,” the so-called Cretaceous-Tertiary catastrophic extinction that contradicted the hitherto widely accepted theory of the gradual dying out of so many life-forms about 60 million years ago.<sup>3</sup>

In the course of reading many documents from various archives for other research projects I had identified a number that appeared to provide evidence that verified testimony by defendants in the Moscow Trials. It seemed to me that more such documentary evidence might well be found if I actually set out to look for it. I also realized that, if no one ever set about looking for it, it would probably never be found and we would never know.

The fact that we have formed this hypothesis does not at all mean that we have predetermined the result of our research. Some hypothesis or “theory” is a necessary precondition to any inquiry. Gould reminds us of Darwin’s perceptive statement made to Henry Fawcett in 1861:

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, “Dinosaur in a Haystack” *Natural History* 101 (March 1992): 2-13. It is widely available online, including at <http://www.inf.fu-berlin.de/lehre/SS05/efs/materials/Dinosaur-Leviathan.pdf>



How odd it is that anyone should not see that all observation must be for or against some view if it is to be of any service!

The present study is a “test” in Gould’s sense: “a fine example of theory” – Gould means “hypothesis” here – “confirmed by evidence that no one ever thought of collecting before the theory itself demanded such a test.”

I have also been mindful of Gould’s caution that a test does not prejudice the inquiry itself:

Please note the fundamental difference between demanding a test and guaranteeing the result. The test might just as well have failed, thus dooming the theory. Good theories invite a challenge but do not bias the outcome.

In the first section of this book we undertake to evaluate the Moscow Trials testimony with a view to verifying, or disproving, its validity as evidence. Our first step was to carefully study the transcripts of the three Moscow Trials of August 1936, January 1937, and March 1938. Our next step was to compare the fact-claims made in these transcripts with other evidence now available. Our goal has been to determine whether the trials testimony can be either confirmed or contradicted by other evidence.

## “Rehabilitations”

By the final years of the existence of the Soviet Union while Mikhail Gorbachev was head of state all the defendants in the Moscow Trials had been “rehabilitated” – declared to have been innocent victims of a frame-up – by high-level government and Communist Party commissions and judicial bodies. Elsewhere we have shown that many of the “rehabilitations” of persons convicted and punished during the 1930s of crimes against the State are in fact fraudulent in nature. (Furr Khrushchev Lied 163-196)

Trotsky has been “rehabilitated” with respect to his exile to Siberia on December 31, 1927, his banishment from the USSR on January 10, 1929, and the removal of his Soviet citizenship and ban on returning to the country of February 20, 1932.<sup>4</sup> Trotsky and Sedov were not formally convicted of the crimes alleged in the three Moscow Trials because they were never brought to trial. The verdict in the First Moscow Trial of August 1936 stated only that they were “subject, in the event of their being discovered on the territory of the U.S.S.R., to immediate arrest and trial.” (1936 Trial 180) Trotsky and Sedov never returned to the USSR and so were never tried and convicted of any crime. Trotsky and Sedov have been declared innocent *de facto* by implication: those through whom they were supposed to have worked have been declared innocent, so they are assumed to have been innocent as well.<sup>5</sup>

However, no evidence to support these decisions has ever been released. It seems safe to conclude that if any such exculpatory evidence did exist in Soviet archives it would have been found and published by now. But a great deal of evidence of Trotsky's and Sedov's *guilt*, rather than of their innocence, has been discovered and continues to be published. We have examined some of it in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* and more of it in *Leon Trotsky's Collaboration with Germany and Japan*.

Today we have access to evidence that was not available to historians only a few years ago. We are no longer in the position of being forced to “believe” or “disbelieve” the testimony given at the

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Milaia moia resnichka’. Sergei Sedov. *Pis'ma iz ssylki*. Sbp: NITS “Memorial”; Hoover Institution Archives (Stanford University), 2006, p. 133. Online at <http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/?t=page&num=1481>

<sup>5</sup> Trotsky's relatives and supporters reportedly advocated for his and his son Leon's “rehabilitation” during the Gorbachev years. But it soon became evident that the Soviet, and then the Russian, authorities were bent on demonizing all Bolshevik leaders, including those they later found to have been unjustly convicted. That would no doubt be the case with Trotsky, whose use of violence during the Civil War was notorious. Also, with the disappearance of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (it was declared illegal in 1991) Trotsky cannot be “reinstated in Party membership.” The successor party to the CPSU, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, is firmly anti-Trotsky.



Moscow Trials, Trotsky's denials, or the Gorbachev-era "rehabilitation" statements. We can now check many statements made by Moscow Trials defendants by comparing them to other evidence.

In addition to the Moscow trial testimony and Trotsky's own denials we now have more sources from both Soviet and non-Soviet evidence upon which we can draw. We'll discuss these sources in detail.

## Non-Soviet Evidence

The non-Soviet evidence will be of particular interest since it cannot have been fabricated by the Soviet investigation or prosecution. However, we do not mean to suggest that this evidence is more valid in any *objective* way than is the Soviet or partly Soviet evidence. It is *subjectively* more important to those people who have been influenced by the propaganda which has long contended that Soviet evidence is *ipso facto* of less validity because it "might have been fabricated" even when there is no evidence that fabrication has taken place. Non-Soviet evidence may *seem* to be "more credible" to many people than Soviet evidence does. This attitude is, in fact, an example of the "argument from incredulity."

All evidence, regardless of its origins, must be studied carefully to determine whether it is valid or not. It is never the case that Soviet evidence is *ipso facto* less valid than non-Soviet evidence. In reality, both Soviet and non-Soviet evidence must be critically examined in the same way to determine its validity.

We will examine the following non-Soviet evidence:

- \* Documents from the Harvard Trotsky Archive.
- \* Valentin Astrov's 1989 and 1993 testimony concerning his January 1937 testimony, as well as that testimony itself which is not, of course, non-Soviet.

- \* Statements by NKVD defector Genrikh Samoilovich Liushkov to his Japanese handlers.
- \* The Mastny-Benes note of February, 1937.
- \* The memoir of Jules Humbert-Droz, published in Switzerland in 1971.
- \* The reports of Sedov confidant and NKVD spy Mark Zborowski to his Soviet handlers in 1937 and 1938.
- \* The testimony of John D. Littlepage and of Carroll G. Holmes.

## Soviet Evidence

There is a great deal of Soviet evidence that confirms the genuine character of the Moscow Trials. One rich source of such evidence is in the recent (2013) and hard-to-find volume *Politbiuro i Lev Trotskii. Tom 2*. In the third volume of my studies of Trotsky during the 1930s I will subject the several hundred documents in this volume to detailed examination.

Here we will consider some other documents of Soviet origin that confirm the genuineness of the testimony of the defendants in the Moscow Trials:

- \* The statement by Mikhail Frinovsky, the second-in-command to Nikolai Ezhov in the NKVD, of April 11, 1939.
- \* The appeals of their sentences by a number of the defendants in the Moscow Trials.
- \* Pretrial statements by Grigori Zinoviev.
- \* Evidence of Trotsky's collaboration with Germany and Japan confirming the genuine character of the Second and Third Moscow Trials, since Trotsky was charged with these crimes there. We have examined this fascinating question in detail in *Leon Trotsky's Collaboration with Germany and Japan*. Here we discuss only:



+ Marshal Semion Budyonny's letter to Marshal Kliment Voroshilov.

\* The Arao Document.

\* Nikolai Ustrialov's confessions.

## Differential confessions

Many Moscow Trials defendants stubbornly denied some of the accusations leveled at them by the Prosecution while confessing guilt to other serious crimes. The most famous example of such differential confessions is that of Bukharin, who confessed to a number of specific, serious crimes but spent much of his testimony and almost all of his final remarks stoutly rejecting his guilt in yet other serious crimes with which the prosecution had charged him. This itself is good evidence that Bukharin's confessions were not the result of force.

## Evidence and Conspiracy

The Oppositionist groups within the USSR, including the Trotskyists, and Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov who were outside the USSR, were engaged in conspiracies. The Trotsky archives at Harvard and the Hoover Institution have revealed some information about Trotsky's conspiracies during the 1930s. However, there is a great deal that these archives do not disclose to us. The Moscow Trials concern conspiracies carried on in secret, of which little – if, indeed, any – written documentation can be expected.

It would be absurd to blame Trotsky for using conspiratorial techniques in his conspiracy (many would blame him for the conspiracy itself, however). But we must take these conspiratorial techniques fully into account when we discuss evidence. It is just as absurd to expect the same level of evidence in the case of a conspiracy as we would expect to find in documenting other kinds of historical events.

To those who refuse to accept the logic of the evidence we put the following question: What kind of evidence would you accept, from among the kinds of evidence that it is reasonable to expect might exist?

- \* There is a huge amount of Soviet evidence. No evidence exists that any of this Soviet evidence has been fabricated or faked.
- \* We have significant non-Soviet evidence that corroborates the Soviet evidence.
- \* Some of the non-Soviet evidence that corroborates the Soviet evidence is from the Harvard Trotsky Archive – from Trotsky and Sedov themselves.
- \* Trotsky's archive at Harvard has been purged of incriminating documents.
- \* Only Sedov and Trotsky knew the full extent of their conspiracy.

We will consider all of these points in the present book.

## Significance of Our Results

We can now verify many of the statements made in the testimony of Moscow Trials defendants. We can also show that, in a few cases, Moscow Trials defendants lied in their testimony. All the lies we have identified, with one exception, concealed important matters from the Prosecution. In each case (with the one exception mentioned) this appears to be an attempt by the defendant to shield himself in some way, not an attempt to confess to additional wrongdoing.

The one exception is the so-called “mercury affair” (*rtutnoe delo*) in the Third Moscow Trial. One of the defendants, P.P. Bulanov, confessed that he and former NKVD chief G.G. Iagoda had conspired to poison Nikolai Ezhov, head of the NKVD, with mercury. The Prosecution in the Third Moscow Trial was indeed

fooled. Subsequent investigation under Lavrentii Beria, the new head of the NKVD, uncovered the fact that Ezhov himself had instructed Bulanov to fabricate this lie in order to give himself, Ezhov, additional credibility. The “mercury affair” was indeed a fabrication foisted upon a Moscow Trials defendant by the NKVD. But it was done behind the backs of the Prosecution and, of course, of Stalin.

This first section of the present book is devoted to the source criticism of the Moscow Trials testimony. Our research has validated the Moscow Trials testimony as evidence. The implications of this fact for this study may be stated simply. There is no reason to believe that the defendants were forced to testify to matters they knew were false or, therefore, that the defendants were innocent of the crimes to which they themselves confessed. Moscow Trials testimony may be cited as evidence alongside any other evidence.

In the following chapters we will examine fact-claims made by Moscow Trials defendants that can be checked in non-Soviet or Soviet sources now available. The chapters are organized around the examination of the non-trial evidence to be used as the control or “check” on the Trials testimony.

In this book we are primarily interested in this non-Trials evidence for the purpose of verifying the Trials testimony. However, we will also discuss other important aspects of the documents containing this non-Trials evidence. In many cases these documents are of great interest not only for their usefulness in providing a check on the Moscow Trials testimony, but as evidence in the investigation of other important events in Soviet history. We will provide some overview of the importance of this evidence in the investigation of these other important events as well.



## Chapter 2. Non-Soviet Evidence – The Harvard Trotsky Archive

In 1939, 1940, and again in 1953 Leon Trotsky's archives were sold and transferred to Harvard University. Trotsky stipulated that the personal section remain closed until 40 years after his death. It was opened to researchers on January 2, 1980. (Van Heijenoort History)

Among the first to study its contents was Pierre Broué (1926-2005), at that time the foremost Trotskyist historian in the world. From 1980 until his death in 2005 Broué edited the journal *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* (hereafter CahLT) in which he published many articles outlining his discoveries in the Harvard Trotsky Archive (TA). His 1987 biography of Trotsky made some use of these discoveries, as did his 1993 biography of Leon Sedov.<sup>1</sup>

Very soon after the TA was opened Broué and his team began to discover that Trotsky had deliberately lied in his published works. First they found evidence that the bloc of Oppositionists, including Trotskyists, Zinovievists, Rights, and others, had really existed. The activities of this bloc were the major allegation in all three of the Moscow Trials. Trotsky and Sedov always denied that any such bloc existed and claimed that it was an invention by Stalin. Broué identified documents in the TA that proved that Trotsky and Sedov had lied: the bloc had indeed existed.

In subsequent articles Broué disclosed other lies by Trotsky. Most of his evidence was found in the Harvard TA. Some of it came from

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<sup>1</sup> *Trotsky*. Paris: Fayard, 1987; *Léon Sedov. Fils de Trotsky, Victime de Staline*. Paris: Editions Ouvrières, 1993. A detailed discussion of Broué's life and activities can be read in the bibliographical article "The Meaning of Pierre Broué (1926-2005). A biographical sketch." At [http://www.trotskyana.net/Trotskyists/Pierre\\_Broue/Pierre\\_Broue\\_Meaning.html](http://www.trotskyana.net/Trotskyists/Pierre_Broue/Pierre_Broue_Meaning.html) The publication *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* is discussed, with a table of contents of each issue, at [http://www.trotskyana.net/Research\\_facilities/journals/journals.html#clt](http://www.trotskyana.net/Research_facilities/journals/journals.html#clt)

the collection of Trotsky-Sedov correspondence in the Nicolaevsky Collection at the Hoover Institution. <sup>2</sup>

Broué always claimed that these lies by Trotsky were of very limited significance. He insisted that Trotsky and Sedov lied only to protect those Trotskyists in the underground within the USSR. But in fact Broué never explored the significance of Trotsky's lies for evaluating the Moscow Trials testimony as evidence or for understanding Trotsky's activities generally. Like non-Trotskyist anticommunist researchers, he continued to assume, without evidence, that the Moscow Trials testimony was fundamentally false, coerced from innocent defendants by the NKVD investigators, by the Soviet prosecution, and therefore by Stalin.

Broué wrote:

I think that the new data concerning the "Opposition bloc," the organization of two Communist blocs of Oppositions, the attempt to unify the Communist Opposition, definitively destroys all the legends and preconceived ideas about an all-mighty, blood-thirsty, Machiavellian Stalin. The Soviet Union in the thirties was passing through a serious economic and political crisis. Stalin was more and more isolated and many people, including some from the ranks of privileged bureaucracy of which he was only the best expression and the unifier, began to think about the necessity of getting rid of him. The Moscow Trials were not a gratuitous crime committed in cold blood, but a counter-stroke in a conflict which was really, as Trotskii wrote, "a preventive civil war." (Broué POS 110)

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<sup>2</sup> This collection is outlined at this page:

[http://www.trotskyana.net/Research\\_facilities/PublicArchives\\_America/publicarchives\\_america.html#hoover](http://www.trotskyana.net/Research_facilities/PublicArchives_America/publicarchives_america.html#hoover)

This remark by Broué is more than enigmatic. It begs the whole question: had the conspiracies alleged in the Moscow Trials really existed, or not? If, as Broué says here, the Moscow Trials were a “counterstroke,” then does this not imply that the originating “stroke” was, or were, conspiracies by those who wanted to get rid of him (Stalin)? And since the evidence on which Broué based this paragraph was that of Trotsky’s falsehoods, does that not mean that Trotsky was also a party to these conspiracies?

In this article we see Broué carefully approach the question of a completely new view of the Moscow Trials and the conspiracies alleged in them. But then Broué retreats. He never develops this idea. As far as we know, he never mentions it again.

In 1985 and 1986 American historian Arch Getty published the evidence, also discovered in the TA, that Trotsky and Sedov had lied about Trotsky’s continued contact with some of his supporters within the USSR. Trotsky had either maintained or renewed relations with some of them long after he had claimed to have cut off all contact with them. Getty identified evidence of this in the TA.

Getty also discovered that the TA had been “purged” – materials had been removed. Getty logically concluded that these materials must have been incriminating, politically sensitive materials. Broué, who knew and referred to Getty’s research, never mentioned this very important discovery by Getty. This is curious, since Broué had himself suggested that other materials had been removed from the TA. Later in this book we explore this pregnant omission of Broué’s.

Most of the falsehoods by Trotsky that Broué discovered are directly or indirectly related to the Moscow Trials. Some of Trotsky’s lies that we ourselves have discovered concern the Kirov Assassination of December 1, 1934.<sup>3</sup> Trotsky’s lies about the Kirov murder became relevant to the Moscow Trials subsequently, when

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<sup>3</sup> We have discussed these in *Trotsky’s ‘Amalgams’*.

members of the bloc of oppositionists confessed to having planned and executed Kirov's murder.

Broué's interest in Trotsky's and Sedov's falsehoods was curiously limited. We do not know why Broué never chose to explore the implications of Trotsky's lies. This is a striking omission, as we will point out in future chapters. It is possible that Broué sensed that the full implications of the lies by Trotsky and Sedov that he had discovered, plus those discovered by Getty, would necessitate a more radical revision of Trotsky's activities during the 1930s than he himself was prepared to face.

\* \* \*

In the following chapters we will demonstrate that the lies by Trotsky that Broué and Getty discovered, as well as some further lies discovered by Swedish scholar Sven-Eric Holmström and some that we ourselves have found, are directly relevant to our evaluation of the validity of the Moscow Trials testimony. Trotsky's falsehoods provide one of the major sources by which we can verify Moscow Trials testimony.

In addition, Trotsky's falsehoods provide important evidence about Trotsky's conspiracy within the USSR during the 1930s. We will also explore this topic in subsequent chapters.



# Chapter 3. Non-Soviet Evidence – The Bloc of Oppositions

The earliest and most dramatic discovery emerged from the Harvard Trotsky Archive within months of its opening to researchers on January 2, 1980. This was the proof that the bloc of oppositionists inside the Soviet Union had really existed. The existence of the bloc was the chief framework for the conspiracies charged against the defendants in all three Moscow trials. The bloc was the link among the different conspiratorial oppositionist groups in which the Moscow Trials defendants confessed membership.

Pierre Broué, whose team made this discovery, minimized its significance. He never explored the implications of his own discovery of the bloc's existence for our understanding of the Moscow Trials, of Trotsky's own activities, and of our understanding of the high politics of the Soviet Union during the 1930s. All researchers after Broué have either done likewise, like Vadim Rogovin, or have ignored the discovery altogether. Gorbachev's men in the USSR, then Russian and Western anticommunist researchers since 1991, have also ignored this important revelation.

In this chapter we outline the discovery of the bloc and the evidence for it, and explore its significance for our project of verifying the testimony at the Moscow Trials.

## The Bloc of Oppositions

Defendants in all three Moscow trials testified that Trotskyists, Zinovievists, and other oppositionists inside the Soviet Union had formed a bloc and agreed to carry out assassinations (in Russian, to employ "terror") against Soviet leaders.

In the transcripts of each of the three Moscow Trials the word "bloc" occurs dozens of times. Here are just a few citations:

### First Moscow Trial

The investigation has also established that the Zinovievites pursued their criminal terroristic practices in a direct **bloc** with the Trotskyites and with *L. Trotsky*, who is abroad. (1936 Trial 11)

The testimonies of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Evdokimov, Mrachkovsky, Bakayev and a number of others accused in the present case, have established beyond doubt that the only motive for organizing the Trotskyite-Zinovievite **bloc** was their striving to seize power at all costs ... (12)

Another member of this centre, Reingold, during examination on July 3, 1936, testified:

"...The main thing on which all the members of the **bloc** agreed was... the recognition of the necessity of consolidating all forces to capture the Party leadership. I must admit that the fundamental aim of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite **bloc** was to remove by violence the leadership of the C.P.S.U. and the Soviet Government, and Stalin in the first place. At the end of 1932 the centre adopted a decision to organize the fight against the leadership of the C.P.S.U. and the Government by terroristic means. I know that the Trotskyite section of the **bloc** received instructions from L. D. Trotsky to adopt the path of terrorism and to prepare attempts on the life of Stalin." (Vol. XXVII, p. 52) (13)

VYSHINSKY: What was the attitude of the Trotskyite part of your **bloc** on the question of terrorism?

ZINOVIEV: In our negotiations on the formation of a united centre this question played a decisive part. By that time the so-called Zinovievite part of the **bloc** was fully ripe for such decisions.

VYSHINSKY: Did Smirnov display any activity in relation to this, or not?

ZINOVIEV: Smirnov, in my opinion, displayed more activity than any one else, and we regarded him as the undisputed head of the Trotskyite part of the **bloc**, as the man best informed about Trotsky's views, and fully sharing these views. (53)

KAMENEV: ...When we returned to Moscow, we made no changes whatever in the basis of our **bloc**. On the contrary, we proceeded to press forward the terroristic conspiracy. (66)

ZINOVIEV: ...At the same time (says Zinoviev), I conducted negotiations with Tomskey, whom I informed about our **bloc** with the Trotskyites. Tomskey expressed complete solidarity with us. (73)

SMIRNOV: I admit that I belonged to the underground Trotskyite organization, joined the **bloc**, joined the centre of this **bloc**, met Sedov in Berlin in 1931, listened to his opinion on terrorism and passed this opinion on to Moscow. (85)

## Second Moscow Trial

RADEK: Pyatakov and I arrived at the conclusion that this directive sums up the work of the **bloc**, dots all the i's and crosses all the t's by bringing out very sharply the fact that under all circumstances the government of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite **bloc** could only be the government of the restoration of capitalism. (6)

PYATAKOV: Kamenev came to visit me at the People's Commissariat on some pretext or other. He very clearly and distinctly informed me about the Trotskyite-Zinovievite centre which had been formed. He said that the **bloc** had been restored; then he mentioned the names of a number of people who belonged to the centre ... (36)

PYATAKOV: It was during this conversation with Radek that we discussed the question about the very great predominance of Zinovievites in the main centre, and whether we should not raise the question of making certain changes in the composition of the main centre.

VYSHINSKY: In which direction?

PYATAKOV: In the direction of introducing more of the Trotskyite faction in the Trotskyite-Zinovievite united **bloc**.

RADEK: From the moment the **bloc** was formed the circle of persons against whom it was intended to carry out terrorist acts was known. (76)

LIVSHITZ: Yes. I considered that since we were carrying on a struggle for the coming to power of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite **bloc**, it was necessary to do this. (118)

ROMM: I was Tass correspondent in Geneva and Paris. I went to Moscow on official business and met Radek who informed me that in pursuance of Trotsky's directives, a Trotskyite-Zinovievite **bloc** had been organized, but that he and Pyatakov had not joined that centre. (139)

SOKOLNIKOV: In comparison with what we had had, to some extent, since 1932 and, in the main, since



1934, when the defeatist attitude of the **bloc** finally took shape. (154)

SEREBRYAKOV: In the autumn of 1932, Mrachkovsky came to see me and informed me about the creation of a Trotskyite- Zinovievite **bloc**, told me who were the members of this centre, and then informed me that the centre had decided to create a reserve centre in the event of its being exposed. (168)

### Third Moscow Trial

The title of the transcript of this trial is:

“Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet ‘**Bloc** of Rights and Trotskyites.”

...the accused in the present case organized a conspiratorial group named the “**bloc** of Rights and Trotskyites,”... (5)

GRINKO: Along with wrecking activities in the sphere of capital construction and agriculture, the **bloc** of Rights and Trotskyites carried on quite extensive undermining activities in the sphere of trade turnover. (81)

IVANOV: Fully and entirely. I consider myself responsible and guilty of the gravest crimes. I was one of the active members of the group of the Rights, the “**bloc** of Rights and Trotskyites.” (110)

VYSHINSKY: Ivanov states that he learnt from you of the existence of a **bloc** between the Trotskyites, the Right groups and the nationalist groups. Do you corroborate this?

BUKHARIN: I do. (137)

VYSHINSKY: Did you know that the program of this centre and of the whole group of the **bloc** of Rights and Trotskyites included terrorist acts?

ZUBAREV: Yes, I did know. (144)

VYSHINSKY: Will it be right or wrong to say that in the period of the years 1932-33 a group was organized which we may call the Anti-Soviet **Bloc** of Rights and Trotskyites?

RYKOV: It was so in fact. Its organizational expression, since 1933-34, was the so-called contact centre. (180)

VYSHINSKY: This **bloc**, you said, included the Rights. Who else was included in this **bloc**?

RYKOV: The Rights, the Trotskyites and the Zinovievites. (181)

VYSHINSKY: ...Were Tukhachevsky and the military group of conspirators members of your **bloc**?

BUKHARIN: They were.

VYSHINSKY: And they discussed with the members of the **bloc**?

BUKHARIN: Quite right. (189)

VYSHINSKY: As the preliminary investigation and the Court proceedings in the present case have established, the dastardly assassination of S. M. Kirov on December 1, 1934, by the Leningrad Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist centre was organized in accordance with a decision of the "**bloc** of Rights and Trotskyites."

Trotsky always denied this accusation, as in the following passage from his testimony to the Dewey Commission in April, 1937:

GOLDMAN: Did you ever discuss with anyone the possibility of organizing a united center between your political followers and the followers of Zinoviev and Kamenev in the Soviet Union, after the break-up of your bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev?

TROTSKY: Never. My articles show that it is absolutely impossible. My appreciation of them, my total contempt after the capitulation, my hostility to them and their hostility to me, excluded that absolutely.

GOLDMAN: Have you read the testimony of Zinoviev and Kamenev and the other defendants in the first Moscow trial?

TROTSKY: Yes.

GOLDMAN: Wherein these defendants claimed that you instructed several of them to establish a united center between your political followers and their political followers? Have you read such testimonies?

TROTSKY: Yes.

GOLDMAN: What have you to say about that?

TROTSKY: It is a falsehood organized by the GPU and supported by Stalin. (CLT 87-88)

## Evidence of the Bloc in the Harvard Trotsky Archive

In 1980 Trotskyist historian Pierre Broué discovered materials in the Harvard Trotsky Archive that proved that a bloc of oppositions was indeed formed with Trotsky's agreement.

C'est en effectuant à la Bibliothèque du Collège de Harvard les recherches documentaires prévues pour

l'édition des volumes des oeuvres des années 1936 et 1937 que les chercheurs et collaborateurs de l'Institut Léon Trotsky ont été amenés à une découverte d'importance: l'existence, en Union soviétique en 1932, d'un « bloc des oppositions » contre Staline.

Translated:

While doing documentary research at the Library of Harvard College for the edition of the volumes of the works of the years 1936 and 1937 the researchers and assistants from the Institut Léon Trotsky made an important discovery: the existence, in the Soviet Union in 1932, of a “bloc of oppositions” against Stalin. (Broué 1980, 5)

Trotsky and Sedov had lied about this, obviously for the purpose of preserving their conspiracy. A Trotskyist as well as a scholar, Broué explicitly excused Trotsky's lying on these grounds.

Broué denied that the parties in the bloc agreed upon “terror.” He also claimed that the bloc had been dissolved shortly after being formed without having done anything. But Broué cited no evidence to support these assertions. The evidence shows that the bloc did continue to function. In *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* and in *Leon Trotsky's Collaboration with Germany and Japan* we have examined the evidence that the Rightists and Trotskyists in the bloc did indeed agree to use “terror” against the Soviet leadership, as the prosecution in the first and Second Moscow Trials alleged and as the defendants admitted.

## The “Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites” Existed

The evidence of the bloc's existence discovered by Broué is contained in a complex of documents in the TA:

\* A copy of a letter in German from Trotsky to his son Sedov.



\* This is accompanied by a letter from Trotsky's secretary Jean van Heijenoort dated July 3, 1937, who made the copy of – retyped – Trotsky's letter.

The original of Trotsky's letter is missing. It must have been destroyed when the Trotsky Archive was “purged” of incriminating materials. We know about this “purging” because it was done imperfectly. We will discuss this “purging” later in this study.

Broué reported that his team uncovered one more piece of evidence concerning the bloc:

\* A letter in invisible ink from Sedov to Trotsky in which the formation and composition of the bloc is outlined.

Some curious statements in Broué's 1980 article suggest that he and his team found other materials which they do not directly identify.

\* Broué states (7) that Trotsky replied on November 3, 1932, to the letter in invisible ink written by his son. But the copy of Trotsky's letter retyped by van Heijenoort and identified by Broué bears no date. On the previous pages (5-6) Broué had dated it “at the end of 1932, in October or November,” by internal evidence.

Broué is unlikely to have simply imagined a date as precise as “November 3, 1932.” Therefore, this remark suggests either that Broué had seen another letter by Trotsky that he does not further identify, or that he has made an error here.

\* Broué states that the letter from Sedov to Trotsky in invisible ink enumerates the groups in, or about to enter, the bloc as follows:

Le lettre à l'encre sympathique de Léon Sedov fait apparaître l'existence des groupes suivants: le groupe trotskyste d'U.R.S.S. («notre fraction»), les «zinoviévistes», le groupe d'I.N. Smirnov, le groupe Sten-Lominadzé, le groupe «Safar(ov)-Tarkhan(ov),» «les droitiers» et «les libéraux.» (7)

Translated:

The letter in invisible ink of Leon Sedov's revealed the existence of the following groups: the Trotskyist group in the USSR ("our fraction"), the "Zinovievists," the group of I.N. Smirnov, the group of Sten-Lominadze, the group "Safar(ov)-Tarkhan(ov)," "the Rights" and "the liberals." (7)

However, the letter in question does not mention Rightists ("droitiers") or liberals ("libéraux") at all. The letter of Trotsky to Sedov referred to above does mention "Rightists" ("die Rechten"), implying that they will "become more involved." None of the three documents makes any mention of "liberals." Assuming again that Broué did not simply imagine that "Rightists" and "liberals" were mentioned, it follows that he conflated in his mind at least two separate documents: the letter in invisible ink, in which the other groups are mentioned, and another letter or document that mentions "Rightists" and "liberals" as being part of the bloc.

We do not know who was meant by the term "liberals." Sedov refers to I.N. Smirnov and those around him, including Eduard S. Gol'tsman, by this term in his *Red Book* (*Livre rouge sur le procès de Moscou*)<sup>1</sup>. But Sedov did this while he and Trotsky were denying any contact with Smirnov. Broué discovered that Trotsky was indeed in touch with Smirnov. Smirnov was in fact the leader of the clandestine Trotskyist group inside the USSR and the central figure in the bloc. That suggests that in calling Smirnov a "liberal" in his book Sedov may have been "covering" for him.

The following cryptic remark of Broué's suggests that he and his team located other documents that mention the bloc:

Elle a découvert également d'autres allusions au «bloc," toute une discussion sur les conditions

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<sup>1</sup> Paris: Editions Ourviers, 1936, 97-98.

nouvelles créés par son apparition, dans la correspondance entre Trotsky et son fils, ainsi que des textes, dont certains avaient été publiés, qui éclairent cette période de l'histoire de l'U.R.S.S. (7)

Translated:

The team [of researchers, led by Broué] has also discovered other allusions to the bloc and a whole discussion on the new conditions created by its appearance, in the correspondence between Trotsky and his son, as well as texts, of which some have been published, that shed light on this period of the history of the USSR.

According to Broué Trotsky discussed the “liberals” in a letter to Sedov of October 12, 1932, which he identifies as No. 4777 of the Harvard Trotsky Archive. (16 and n. 42)

On the same page Broué suggests that there must have been other documents that made clear who the “liberals” were and what they had done for the Trotskyists – documents that, he suggests, “have probably been destroyed.” (16) This is an interesting remark by Broué, for he deliberately omits any mention of the discovery by Arch Getty that the Trotsky Archive has been “purged,” with incriminating documents removed from it.

As we shall see, Broué’s further discussion of the bloc rests upon several assumptions, one of which is that the bloc came to nothing because there is no mention of it in the Trotsky Archive after these documents of 1932. As Broué admits in passing in a later work, even this latter claim is not true. Later we’ll explore Broué’s self-contradictions on the question of the bloc.

Trotsky’s remark that they must not “yield the field to the Rightists” implies that the Rightists were already active on their own accord. Writing in 1980 Broué stated that there was no evidence of any activity by those known at the time as the “Rightists” – Bukharin, Rykov, Tomskii and their followers. (12-13) However, thanks to documents published since the end of the

USSR we know today that the Rightists were indeed active at this time.

Broué's article thus supposes at least the following documents, only some of which are extant and identified:

- \* Correspondence between Trotsky and Sedov about setting up the bloc (not extant);
- \* A letter from Sedov to Trotsky of October 12, 1932, concerning participation of the "liberals," no doubt in the bloc (#4777, Broué p. 16, extant);
- \* Trotsky's letter to Sedov accepting the proposal of a bloc (#13095, extant);
- \* Sedov's letter in invisible ink to Trotsky announcing that the bloc has been formed (#4782, extant);
- \* Trotsky's response to this letter dated November 3, 1932 (Broué p. 7; not further identified);
- \* Trotsky's letter of October 30, 1932, concerning the "liberals" and mentioning the "Rightists." (#10047, Broué p. 16, extant);
- \* Another letter of Sedov to Trotsky in invisible ink naming "Rightists" and "liberals" as among the groups in or about to join the bloc (Broué p. 7 and p. 14; not further identified);
- \* Other documents "not found at Harvard and which were probably destroyed" (Broué p. 16).

Judging from the one document by Trotsky that we have that mentions the Rightists and from Broué's discussion of other documents we have not seen, it seems clear that the Rightists were in fact a part of the bloc from 1932. This accords with the testimony of Valentin Astrov in January 1937. We will examine it later.



## Soviet Rehabilitation Reports Lie About the Bloc

The existence of this bloc provides additional evidence that Soviet “Rehabilitation” reports of both the Khrushchev and Gorbachev eras are dishonest and untrustworthy, political whitewash jobs rather than honest reviews of the cases and determinations of innocence on the basis of evidence.

The “Zapiska” of the Shvernik Report, commissioned by Khrushchev in 1962 and finished no later than February 18, 1963, concluded that all the accusations against the accused at the Bukharin Trial were falsified and denied the existence of a “bloc of Rights and Trotskyites” itself. (RKEB 2 625-30)

Никакого «Антисоветского право-троцкистского блока» в действительности не существовало и осужденные по этому делу контрреволюционной деятельностью не занимались.

Translated:

No “Anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyists” existed in reality and those condemned in this case did not engage in any counterrevolutionary activity. (630)

In 1989 the Gorbachev-era “Rehabilitation Commission” of the Central Committee of the CPSU came to the same conclusion:

Установлено, таким образом, что после 1927 г. бывшие троцкисты и зиновьевцы организованной борьбы с партией не проводили, между собой ни на террористической, ни на другой основе не объединялись, а дело об «объединенном троцкистско-зиновьевском центре» искусственно создано органами НКВД по прямому указанию и при непосредственном участии И. В. Сталина.

Translated:

It has been established therefore that after 1927 the former Trotskyists and Zinovievists did not carry out any organized struggle against the party, did not unite with each other either on a terrorist or any other basis, and that the case of the "United Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center" was fabricated by the organs of the NKVD upon the direct order and with the direct participation of J.V. Stalin. (Izv TsK KPSS 8 (1989) 94)

Установлено, что обвинение осужденных в «преступной связи» с Л. Д. Троцким и Л. Л. Седовым является необоснованным. Это же показала и специальная проверка, проведенная Прокуратурой СССР в 1988 г.

Translated:

It has been established that the accusation against the accused of "criminal ties" with L.D. Trotsky and L.L. Sedov are without foundation. This was also proven by a special verification process of the USSR Procuracy in 1988. (Izv TsK KPSS 9 (1989) 49)

Как теперь с несомненностью установлено, дело так называемого «антисоветского правотроцкистского блока» было полностью сфальсифицировано

Translated:

As has now been established beyond any doubt, the case of the so-called "Anti-Soviet Right-Trotskyite Bloc" was completely fabricated... (Izv TsK KPSS 5 (1989) 81)

В действительности ни «блоков» ни так называемых «центров» не существовало.

Translated:

In reality, neither the “blocs” nor the so-called “centers” existed. (RKEB 3 342).

Aleksandr Iakovlev, Gorbachev’s expert who led the anticommunist campaign from the Politburo, repeated the falsehood that no bloc had existed.

Ягodu искусственно включили в состав не существовавшего «правотроцкистского» блока.

Translated:

Yagoda was falsely included among the members of the nonexistent “Right-Trotskyite Bloc.” (RKEB 3 328)

This means that both the Shvernik Report and the Soviet “Rehabilitation” reports are falsified.<sup>2</sup> Already in 1980 the Harvard Trotsky Archive yielded to Broué unmistakable evidence that a broad bloc of oppositionist forces, including Trotskyists, Zinovievists, and others, did in fact exist. The NKVD of the 1930s termed the complexly-interlocking set of oppositional conspiracies the “klubok,” or “tangle.” If any of these conspiracies were acknowledged to have existed, it would be difficult to deny the existence of the rest, since all the defendants implicated others in a chain that, directly or indirectly, connected them all.

The Gorbachev-era “Rehabilitation” report on the 1936 Trial defendants is likewise falsified. Though it has not been officially published and is still secret in Russia today the Decree of the

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<sup>2</sup> Parts of the 1988 “Rehabilitation” report on the Moscow Trial of August 1936 are copied verbatim, or almost so, from the Shvernik Commission of twenty-five years earlier. No one could know this in 1988, since the complete text of the Shvernik Report was not published until 1993-1994.

Soviet Supreme Court dated June 13, 1988, is in the Volkogonov Archive. It states, concerning Gol'tsman:

Э.С. Гольцман в судебном заседании ... заявил, что до ареста о существовании троцкистско-зиновьевского центра не знал. Эти объяснения Э.С. Гольцмана ничем не опровергнуты.

Translated:

During the trial E.S. Gol'tsman ... declared that before his arrest he did not know about the existence of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist center. These explanations by E.S. Gol'tsman remain without refutation.<sup>3</sup>

This statement is false. Trotsky's and Sedov's correspondence in 1932, published in part in French translation by Broué, shows that Gol'tsman was the person who carried messages concerning the formation of the bloc to Smirnov inside the USSR (Broué 1980 35-37; Broué POS 99). What's more, this information was available to the Soviet authorities in 1988, when they began once again to deny that the bloc had ever existed (Khrushchev's men had denied it too).

In 1991 Getty's article was published, in Russian translation, in the authoritative Party journal *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*. At the end of the article Boris Starkov, acting for the Party journal, denied as best he could the contents of Getty's article.<sup>4</sup> In today's Russia too many of these investigative materials remain effectively classified.<sup>5</sup> This proves that the "Rehabilitation" report itself is a fraud.

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<sup>3</sup> "Postanovlenie No. 79-88 Plenuma Verkhovnogo Suda SSSR. 13 iyunia 1988 g.," p. 7. (151). Volkogonov Papers Reel 3 Container 4 Folder 16. In the author's possession.

<sup>4</sup> Getti, Dz.A. "Trotskii v izgnanii. Osnovaniia IV Internatsionala." *Voprosy Istorii KPSS* 5 (1991), 72-83. Starkov's "commentary" is at the end, pp. 82-83.

<sup>5</sup> In volume two of this study we will discuss and publish some of these materials that have become available only very recently.

## Valentin Astrov's Testimony

On January 11, 1937, Valentin Astrov, one of Bukharin's former students and a participant in the conspiratorial meetings that constituted the Rightist part of the bloc, gave a confession statement to NKVD investigators. Two days later Astrov confronted Bukharin and accused him directly.

In his January 1937 confession to the NKVD Astrov was specific that the Rightists had joined a bloc with the Trotskyists in 1932.

В начале 1932 года СЛЕПКОВ у него на квартире на совещании актива организации обосновывал необходимость заключения блока с троцкистами. Он говорил, что «троцкисты приняли хозяйственную платформу правых, а правые — внутрипартийную платформу троцкистов. Тактика террора объединяет нас. Разногласия между нами и троцкистами несущественны.»

Ссылаясь на свой и МАРЕЦКОГО опыт многочисленных подпольных встреч с троцкистами в Москве, Самаре, Саратове и Ленинграде, СЛЕПКОВ утверждал, что троцкисты эволюционируют, приближаясь к нам. СЛЕПКОВ сообщил совещанию, что его точка зрения на необходимость заключения блока с троцкистами согласована с БУХАРИНЫМ, т.е. с центром правых и совещание приняло эту точку зрения. Через несколько дней БУХАРИН на квартире у СЛЕПКОВА в присутствии МАРЕЦКОГО подтвердил необходимость такого блока.

Translated:

In the beginning of 1932 in a meeting of the active members of the organization in his apartment Slepko justified the necessity of forming a bloc with the Trotskyists. He said that "the Trotskyists have accepted the economic platform of the Rightists, and the Rightists, the inner Party platform of the Trotskyists. The tactic of terror unites us. Differences between us and the Trotskyists are secondary."

Referring to his and Maretskii's experience of numerous underground meetings with Trotskyists in Moscow, Samara, Saratov, and Leningrad, Slepkov asserted that the Trotskyists were evolving, coming close to us. Slepkov informed the meeting that his views on the necessity of forming a bloc with the Trotskyists had been agreed to by Bukharin, that is with the Rightist center, and the meeting accepted this view. A few days later in Slepkov's apartment and with Maretskii present Bukharin confirmed the necessity of such a bloc. (Lubianka 1937-1938 32)

Both Broué (13) and Astrov name Slepkov and Maretskii as members of the Rightist part of the bloc. Broué says:

L'ensemble du matériel montre que le «bloc» ou, au moins, l'une de ses parties constituantes était en contact avec le group Rioutine-Slepkov, «les droitiers». (Broué 1980 16)

...les comptes rendus de réunions du secrétariat international de l'Opposition de gauche et quelques lettres de Léon Sedov font apparaître qu'il désigne systématiquement à l'époque par le terme de «droitiers» ce que les historiens désignent par «groupe Rioutine," un groupe original apparu précisément en 1932. Nous ne possédons sur son existence et son activité que des témoignages indirects et ses documents n'ont jamais été connus, même partiellement. Rioutine ... avait, avec P. A. Galkin, constitué un groupe dont personne ne nie le caractère conspiratif organisé, dans lequel se retrouvaient des éléments d'origine diverse comme les disciples de Boukharine, fleurons de l'Institut des professeurs rouges, Alexandre Slepkov et Dimitri Maretsky,...(Broué 1980 13)

Translated:



The material as a whole demonstrates that the bloc, or at least one of its constituent parts, was in contact with the Riutin-Slepkov group, “the Rights.”

... the transcripts of the meetings of the International Secretariat of the Left Opposition and a few letters of Leon Sedov's make it clear that it [the term “droitiers”, or “Rightists” – GF] regularly designated at the time by the term “Rightists” what the historians call the “Riutin group,” an original group that appeared precisely in 1932. We have only indirect evidence about its existence and activities, and its documents have never been made public, even in part. Riutin... with P.A. Galkin, constituted a group whose organized conspiratorial nature has never been denied by anyone and in which persons of different origins could be found, including pupils of Bukharin's, products of the Institute of Red Professors, Alexander Slepkov and Dmitri Maretsky ,...

Astrov himself was also a former student at the Institute of Red Professors.

## Did the Bloc Shut Down by Early 1933?

In 1980 Broué claimed that the bloc was no more by sometime in early 1933 with the arrests of some of its leading members.

Pourtant, quand ces textes paraissent à Berlin dans le *Biulleten Oppositsii*, le «bloc» -- si tant est qu'il ait pu se traduire autrement dans la réalité et, par exemple, tenir des reunions formelles -- est déjà terminé par l'arrestation de ses principaux protagonistes. La lettre de Sedov qui indique les composantes du bloc mentionne à la fois l'arrestation des dirigeants du groupe d'I. N. Smirnov et de Smirnov lui-même et l'effondrement des « anciens » de l'Opposition de gauche. (Broué 1980 19)

Translated:

However, when these texts appeared in Berlin in the *Bulletin of the Opposition*, the bloc – if it could be said to have had a real existence and, for example, hold formal meetings – had already been terminated by the arrests of its principal protagonists. Sedov's letter identifying the composition of the bloc mentions at the same time the arrest of the leaders of I.N. Smirnov's group and of Smirnov himself and the collapse of the "old ones" of the Left Opposition.

Broué repeated this claim in his 1987 biography of Trotsky. According to Broué Smirnov's arrest and imprisonment and the exile of Zinoviev and Kamenev brought the bloc to an end.

Ce n'est que peu à peu que la vérité s'impose à lui et à Sedov. L'exil de Zinoviev et de Kamenev, la condamnation d'I.N. Smirnov, qui purge sa peine à Souzdal, ont sonné le glas du bloc des oppositions.<sup>6</sup>

Translated:

Only gradually did Trotsky and Sedov come to understand the truth. The exile of Kamenev and Zinoviev, the conviction of I.N. Smirnov, who was serving his time at Suzdal, had sounded the funeral bell of the bloc of oppositionists.

## Broué's Misreading of Safarov's Deposition

Broué claims that Safarov testified "publicly" about the bloc's "decomposition":

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<sup>6</sup> Broué, *Trotsky*, Ch. 44 note 49. At [https://www.marxists.org/francais/broue/works/1988/00/PB\\_tky\\_44.htm#sdfootnote49anc](https://www.marxists.org/francais/broue/works/1988/00/PB_tky_44.htm#sdfootnote49anc)

Safarov, définitivement brisé en prison et clairement devenu informateur, sera le premier, en tant que témoin à charge au procès de Zinoviev et Kamenev en janvier 1935, à parler publiquement de la naissance et de la décomposition du bloc<sup>49</sup>. (Broué, Trotsky Ch. 44)

Translated:

Safarov, definitively broken in prison and clearly turned informant, would be the first, as a witness at the trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev in January 1935, to speak publicly about the birth and decay of the bloc.<sup>49</sup>

Note 49 to this passage reads as follows:

49 Déposition de Safarov au procès de Zinoviev et Kamenev, *L'Humanité*,<sup>7</sup> 17 janvier 1935.

Translated:

49. Deposition of Safarov at the trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev, *L'Humanité* January 17, 1934.

But this is not true. In the corresponding passage in *L'Humanité* of January 17, 1935, Safarov said nothing about any “decay” (*décomposition*) of the bloc:

Caractérisant les méthodes contre-révolutionnaires employées par le groupe illégal Zinoviev dans sa lutte contre le pouvoir soviétique, un des participants, Safarov (dont l'affaire est soumise à une instruction complémentaire et sera examinée séparément) déclara «Après des rencontres particulièrement fréquentes et animées en 1932, quand les conspirateurs comptaient inscrire à leur actif certaines difficultés temporaires qui eurent lieu durant la transition du premier au second plan

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<sup>7</sup> *Humanité* was (and still is) the daily newspaper of the French Communist Party

**quinquennal, tous les cercles du groupe illégal, effrayés par la débâcle du groupe contre-révolutionnaire de Rioutine, revinrent à leur activité secrète, à la contre-révolution rampante.»<sup>8</sup>**

Translated:

Characterizing the counterrevolutionary methods used by the illegal Zinoviev group in its struggle against Soviet power one of the participants, Safarov (whose case has been submitted to further investigation and will be examined separately) declared: "After especially frequent and lively meetings in 1932, when the conspirators had to take account of certain temporary difficulties that occurred during the transition between the first and second Five-Year Plans, **all the circles of the illegal group, frightened by the downfall of the Riutin counterrevolutionary group, returned to secret activity, to rampant counterrevolution.**

Far from attesting to any "decay" of the bloc Safarov stated that "all the circles" (the cells) "of the illegal group" (the bloc) returned to secret activity, meaning to "rampant counterrevolution." *Safarov claimed that the bloc continued to exist and to be active – the opposite of what Broué claimed.*

We will leave aside the question of whether Broué somehow misread this passage or whether he deliberately falsified Safarov's words in order to convince his readers that the bloc really had ceased to function. Even if Safarov had testified to the court that the bloc had ceased to function, that would not mean it really had ceased, for such testimony could simply be an attempt at self-

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<sup>8</sup> "Zinoviev, Kamenev et 17 complices devant le tribunal militaire de l'U.R.S.S.." *L'Humanité* 17 janvier 1935 p.3 col 7.

protection. But in fact Safarov stated just the opposite: the bloc continued its work, only in a more clandestine manner.

Broué continued to repeat this claim that the bloc was “dismantled” shortly after February 1933.<sup>9</sup> However, Broué has no evidence that the bloc came to an end. We discuss what we call Broué’s, and Vadim Rogovin’s, “cover-up” in the chapter on the purging of the Harvard Trotsky archive.

Broué’s main error here is his assumption that the bloc was ended when some of its principal members were arrested. This assumption is false. Astrof testified that the bloc continued even in prison:

В Суздальской тюрьме я и участники нашей организации ХАХАРЕВ, ДОМАШИН... и СОМОВ установили связь и дружбу с сидевшими там троцкистами: ГАЕВСКИМ, БОЛОТНИКОВЫМ и МИХАЛЕВИЧЕМ. Мы все сходились на почве взаимного признания террора как метода борьбы с партией и советской властью.... Аналогичные террористические настроения высказывались троцкистом СОМЕРОМ, правым РАДИВИЛИНЫМ, троцкистом ГАЕВСКИМ.

Translated:

In Suzdal’ prison I and the participants of our organization Khakharev, Domashin ... and Somov established contact and friendship with the Trotskyists also imprisoned there: Gaevskii, Bolotnikov, and Mikhalevich. All of us came together on the basis of mutual acceptance of terror as a method of struggle with the party and Soviet power. ... Analogous terrorist attitudes were expressed by the Trotskyist Somer, the Rightist Radivilin, and the Trotskyist Gaevskii. (Lubianka 1937-1938 37)

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<sup>9</sup> E.g. Broué, “Liova, le ‘fiston’”. CahLT 13 (1983), 17.

We know that Astrov's testimony here was truthful because he confirmed it in 1993, after the end of the Soviet Union, when he could have denied it and no one would have known. We examine Astrov's testimony as evidence in another chapter.

Astrov claimed that the bloc of Rights and Trotskyists which, he repeats, was explicitly organized around terror continued to be active in Suzdal' prison, a political "isolator," or special prison with better conditions for political prisoners. In his biography of Trotsky Broué states that Smirnov was also in Suzdal' prison:

L'exil de Zinoviev et de Kamenev, la condamnation d'I.N. Smirnov, qui purge sa peine à Souzdal, ont sonné le glas du bloc des oppositions. (Broué Trotsky Chapter 44)

Translated:

The exile of Zinoviev and Kamenev, the conviction of I.N. Smirnov, who was serving his sentence in Suzdal, sounded the death knell of the opposition bloc.

Broué is correct that I.N. Smirnov was imprisoned in Suzdal' prison. Biographical accounts of Smirnov's life and a commemorative plaque at the former site of the prison itself attest to that fact.<sup>10</sup> We know that the Trotskyists whom Astrov names as participants of the bloc with him while they were in Suzdal' prison were adherents of Smirnov's group. Gaevskii and Bolotnikov are identified as members of Smirnov's Trotskyist group in a Gorbachev-era "Rehabilitation Commission" meeting of May 29, 1990.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Biographical accounts of I.N. Smirnov's life that mention his imprisonment in Suzdal' prison include: the Russian language Wikipedia on him: [http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Смирнов\\_Иван\\_Никитич](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Смирнов_Иван_Никитич) ; The "Memorial Society"'s list of "victims of Stalinism," at <http://lists.memo.ru/d30/f361.htm#n199> . The plaque at the site of the former prison may be seen at [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d//d4/Мемориальная\\_плита\\_в\\_Спасо-Евфимиевом\\_монастыре.JPG](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d//d4/Мемориальная_плита_в_Спасо-Евфимиевом_монастыре.JPG)



Astrov's statement proves that the bloc of Rights and Trotskyists did not end but continued to plan terrorist activities in Suzdal' prison. I.N. Smirnov, the leader of the Trotskyist group and imprisoned at the same prison, may have participated in it too. At the first Moscow trial in August 1936 Smirnov said that after 1931, when he "received Trotsky's instructions on terrorism" and passed them on, he did not resign from the bloc but "did no work." It may be that Smirnov did not participate in meetings of the bloc while in Suzdal'. But there can be no doubt that the bloc continued to meet "on the basis of mutual acceptance of terror." And in fact we do have some evidence that Smirnov had remained active in prison, from a remark by Sedov of May 1934.

## Sedov's remark of May 1934

In his short biography of Sedov published in 1993, in the midst of a discussion of the events of 1932, Broué quotes a report Sedov made in May 1934 to the "international secretariat" of Trotsky's Fourth International. Sedov wrote:

Il faut indiquer que, parmi ces camarades, se trouvent aussi I.N. Smirnov et d'autres, qui nous ont quittés dans le temps, mais qui sont revenus et qui, voici plus d'une année déjà, se trouvent emprisonnés sous le régime d'isolement le plus sévère.<sup>12</sup>

Translated:

It should be noted that among these comrades are also I.N. Smirnov and some others who left us in the past but who have returned and who have now been

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<sup>11</sup> *Reabilitatsiia. Kak Eto Bylo. Seredina 80-kh godov -1991*. Moscow: MDF, 2004. Razdel IV. No. 13, pp. 337 ff. At <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/67974>

<sup>12</sup> The report is published in Léon Sedov, "La situation des bolcheviks-léninistes russes," *CahLT* 24 (1985), 116-120; the quote is on page 120. It is also quoted by Pierre Broué, *Léon Sedov. Fils de Trotsky, Victime de Staline*. Paris: Éditions Ouvrières, 1993, p. 79.

imprisoned under conditions of the severest isolation for more than a year.<sup>13</sup>

Broué assumes that Sedov is referring here to the events of 1932. This appears to reflect Broué's conviction that the bloc was finished by the beginning of 1933. In reality there is no reason to think that Sedov was referring here to the formation of the bloc in 1932. Broué characterizes Sedov's tone as "modest and triumphant" (79). Why would Sedov have been "triumphant" about a bloc that had collapsed more than a year beforehand? In terms of psychology, as well as of chronology and simple logic, we must assume that Sedov was referring to the contemporary situation in May 1934.

At that time Smirnov had been in prison for about 16 months. Why would Sedov report that he "and some others" had "returned" unless they were still active in May 1934? As we have seen, Astrof testified that he was still discussing "terror" with Trotskyists in Suzdal' prison. And Smirnov never denied that he remained a part of the Trotskyist conspiracy after 1932, only that he "did no work." There is no reason to think that Smirnov was being truthful here.

So Broué and Rogovin are guilty at least of the fallacy of presuming that the bloc was no longer active after 1932 because there was no further evidence of it in the Trotsky Archives. It is also possible that they did recognize the significance of Sedov's May 1934 remark but deliberately hid it from their readers. For Broué and Rogovin crossed the line from logical error into the realm of deliberate deception when they ignored Getty's discovery that the Harvard Trotsky Archive had been purged (we discuss their cover-up of Getty's discovery at the beginning of Chapter 6, below). Thanks to Getty we know that evidence of Trotsky's contacts with oppositionists, supporters, and others in the USSR was among the materials purged.

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<sup>13</sup> As we will see, Ante Ciliga's memoir shows that the "isolation" in the Suzdal' isolator was anything but "severe."

Again, suppose the purging of the Trotsky archive had been thorough enough to remove not only the letters Trotsky sent to Oppositionists in the USSR but also the certified mail receipts that Getty found. We would not know that Radek was telling the exact truth when he said he had received a letter from Trotsky in the spring of 1932. Trotsky and Sedov both denied such contact. Many people would reject Radek's claim at trial and "believe" Trotsky and Sedov. Yet the contact – the correspondence – would still have taken place. We discuss this letter in another chapter.

## The "Conspiracy" Factor

Conspirators commit as little as possible – ideally, nothing at all – to writing. They confine knowledge of details of the conspiracy to as few persons as they can. This was the case even with Trotsky and Sedov, who were outside the USSR but always aware that they were under surveillance and that their correspondence could be stolen – as, indeed, some of Sedov's archives were stolen in Paris.

Vadim Rogovin identified one letter that Sedov wrote to Trotsky on the eve of the First Moscow Trial in which "some peculiarities," such as the use of the formal *vy* for "you" instead of the familiar *ty* suggest Sedov thought it might be intercepted. In it Sedov repeats his and his father's version of the Gol'tsman-Smirnov story, i.e. that Gol'tsman did not meet with Trotsky. But the fact that Sedov wrote it in anticipation that it might be "seized" compromises it as evidence: it is not secure, let alone secret, correspondence.<sup>14</sup>

Anyone who studies Jean van Heijenoort's memoir or NKVD agent Marc Zborowski's notes to his handler will realize that these trusted secretaries actually knew very little about Trotsky's and Sedov's contacts with the USSR. In February 1980 Trotskyist historian Pierre Broué interviewed Lilia (Lola) Dallin, formerly Estrina, Sedov's most trusted secretary during the 1930s. She told Broué:

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<sup>14</sup> Rogovin 1937 64-65. The document is identified as Trotsky Archives, document n. 4858.

Il est faux qu'Étienne ait pu trahir autre chose que Sedov ou des archives: les adresses du BO qu'il avait étaient celles de l'extérieur de la Russie. Sedov cloisonnait tout. Il était seul à savoir, par exemple, qui allait en Russie, les gens qui en sortaient etc. Je ne savais pas ce que faisait Étienne et réciproquement. En fait, pour "savoir," il aurait fallu faire parler LD et Liova. (Broué Léon Sedov 210)

Translated:

It is not true that Etienne [the name Zborowski used – GF] could have betrayed anything except Sedov or the archives: the addresses of the B[ulletin of the] O[pposition] that he had were those outside of Russia. Sedov compartmentalized everything. He was the only person who knew, for example, who was going to Russia, the people who were coming out of Russia, etc. I did not know what Etienne was doing and vice versa. To "know" you would really have had to make LD [Trotsky] and Lyova [Sedov] tell you.

Broué too was of this opinion: only Trotsky and Sedov knew about political activity and contacts with the Soviet Union:

Bien que rien ne prouve qu'il ait été au courant du détail de l'activité politique de Sedov, notamment de ses liens avec des oppositionnels russes...<sup>15</sup>

Translated:

Although there is no evidence that he was familiar with the details of Sedov's political activity, especially of his ties with the Russian oppositionists...

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<sup>15</sup> Broué, "Le GPU à la chasse aux trotskystes." CahLT 70 (2000), 91.

Again, according to Broué Sedov even refused to give Zborowski, his own personal address!

En fait, cet homme jeune était un vieux conspirateur: Lola Estrine nous a confié qu'elle n'a jamais su, par exemple, de quelles tâches était chargé Etienne et que ce dernier ne savait rien de ses tâches à elle. En 1955, Etienne lui-même a raconté que Sedov avait refusé de lui donner son adresse personnelle, et qu'il l'avait finalement obtenue en passant par "les Français" ce qui avait provoqué une grande colère de Sedov.<sup>16</sup>

Translated:

In fact this young man was an old conspirator. Lola Estrine has told us that she never knew, for example, what assignments Etienne had been charged with and that he knew nothing about her own assignments. In 1955 Etienne himself told how Sedov had refused to give him his own personal address, and that he had at last obtained it through "the Frenchmen," which had made Sedov very angry.

Dallin/Estrina was a devoted worker for Sedov. It was she who told Sedov to "keep his mouth shut" when Sedov expounded to Zborowski upon the need to assassinate Stalin. When, in the 1950s, Zborowski met with her again and explained that he had spied on Sedov for the NKVD Dallin/Estrina immediately severed all ties with him.<sup>17</sup>

This kind of secretive behavior is, of course, to be expected in the case of any conspiracy, including Trotsky's. It would be absurd to blame Trotsky for using conspiratorial techniques in his conspiracy. But we must take these conspiratorial techniques fully

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<sup>16</sup> "Liova, le 'fiston'" 19.

<sup>17</sup> See "Testimony of Mrs. Lilia Dallin, New York N.Y." *Scope of Soviet Activity in the United States . . .*, March 2, 1956. Part 5. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1956), 136-150.

into account when we discuss evidence. It is just as absurd to expect the same level of evidence in the case of a conspiracy as we would expect to find in documenting other kinds of historical events.



## Chapter 4. Non-Soviet Evidence – Trotsky's Contacts Inside the USSR

Testimony of defendants in the Moscow Trials claimed that Trotsky was in contact with Radek, Sokol'nikov, Gaven, Piatakov, and Preobrazhensky. Trotsky denied contact with them after his exile (with Preobrazhensky, by implication). But evidence in the TA confirms that Trotsky lied: he did in fact have contact with all these men.

During the First Moscow Trial Gol'tsman claimed he had met with Leon Sedov multiple times. Trotsky at first denied any contact with Gol'tsman. But Sedov had already admitted such contact, so Trotsky changed his story. Trotsky and Sedov at first claimed only one meeting between Sedov and Gol'tsman. Later they admitted that there had been a number of such meetings.

Each of these cases represents a verification that Moscow Trial testimony was accurate and Trotsky was lying.

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In January 1986 American historian Arch Getty revealed that the Harvard Trotsky Archive<sup>1</sup> had been "purged." Someone had removed materials from it at some point before it was opened to the public on January 2, 1980. In Getty's words

At the time of the Moscow show trials, Trotsky denied that he had any communications with the defendants since his exile in 1929. Yet it is now clear that in 1932 he sent secret personal letters to former leading oppositionists Karl Radek, G. Sokol'nikov, E.

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<sup>1</sup> This used to be known as the "Closed Archive," since it was closed by Trotsky's instructions until 40 years after his death. (Van Heijenoort, History 295)

Preobrazhensky, and others. While the contents of these letters are unknown, it seems reasonable to believe that they involved an attempt to persuade the addressees to return to opposition.<sup>18</sup> (Getty TIE 27-8)

(TIE n.18 p. 34) Trotsky Papers, 15821. Unlike virtually all Trotsky's other letters (including even the most sensitive) no copies of these remain in the Trotsky Papers. **It seems likely that** they have been removed from the Papers at some time. Only the certified mail receipts remain. At his 1937 trial, Karl Radek testified that he had received a letter from Trotsky containing 'terrorist instructions,' but we do not know whether this was the letter in question.

In his 1985 book Getty was less hesitant in concluding that the archive had been purged. He discovered certified mail receipts of letters to five persons of whom three were Trotsky supporters and two, Kollontai and Litvinov, never had been. He also revealed some new information about dates and destinations for some of the missing letters.

Although Trotsky later denied that he had any communications with former followers in the USSR since his exile in 1929,<sup>19</sup> it is clear that he did. In the first three months of 1932 he sent secret letters to former oppositionists Radek, Sokolnikov, Preobrazhenskii, and others.<sup>20</sup> Although the contents of these letters are unknown, it seems reasonable to believe that they involved an attempt to persuade the addressees to return to opposition. (Getty Origins 119.)

(Origins n. 19 p. 245) The Dewey Commission, *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, New York, 1937, 91, 264, 273. See also *Biulleten' Oppozitsii*, no. 52-3, Oct. 1936, 38-41."

(Origins n. 20 p. 245) Trotsky Papers II, 15821. The letters are dated from April 1932 to December 1932. Those to Sokolnikov and Preobrazhenskii were sent to London, **that to Radek in Geneva**. Other letters were sent to Kollontai and Litvinov. **Copies of these letters have been removed** from Trotsky's papers, but whoever removed them failed to retrieve the certified-mail receipts signed by Trotsky's secretaries.

## Trotsky's Letter to Radek in February-March 1932

Getty wrote:

At his 1937 trial, Karl Radek testified that he had received a letter from Trotsky containing 'terrorist instructions,' but we do not know whether this was the letter in question. (TIE n.18 p.34)

In fact we can be certain that this was indeed the letter in question. In his testimony at the January 1937 trial Radek mentioned a number of letters from Trotsky, beginning with one that he received in February 1932. A little later Radek said "The letter from Trotsky was received in February or March 1932." (1937 Trial p. 92). Postal imprints on the certified mail receipt of Trotsky's letter to Radek, consulted in Harvard's Houghton Library, show that it was delivered on March 3, 1932. This corresponds exactly to Radek's account during the 1937 trial:

VYSHINSKY: How are these dates to be reconciled – February 1932 and the spring?

RADEK: February in Geneva is already the beginning of the spring, and so I conceived this period as the spring. It may have been in March. (1937 Trial 93)

Radek described the contents of this letter of Trotsky's as follows:

Trotsky wrote that the information he possessed led him to conclude that I had become convinced that he was right, and that without the realization of the Trotskyist demands the policy would find itself at an impasse. Trotsky further wrote that since he knew me to be an active person he was convinced that I would return to the struggle.... At the end of the letter Trotsky wrote approximately as follows: "You must bear in mind the experience of the preceding period and realize that for you there can be no returning to the past, that the struggle has entered a new phase and that the new feature in this phase is that either we shall be destroyed together with the Soviet Union, or we must raise the question of removing the leadership." **The word terrorism was not used, but when I read the words "removing the leadership," it became clear to me what Trotsky had in mind. ...** Trotsky informed me that **not only the Trotskyites but also the Zinovievites had decided to return to the struggle and that negotiations for union were under way.** I sent no reply, believing that the matter must be thought over very thoroughly. (1937 Trial 86-7.)

Sedov's letter to Trotsky, partially reprinted in French translation by Broué, confirms Radek's words about the Zinovievists.

The [bloc] has been organized. It includes the Zinovievists, the Sten-Lominadze group, and the Trotskyists (the former "[capitulators]").

Radek testified that he had confirmed that Trotsky intended "terrorism" in a talk with Sergei Mrachkovsky that took place at the end of October or beginning of November 1932.

VYSHINSKY: What did Mrachkovsky reply?

RADEK: He replied quite definitely that the struggle had entered the terrorist phase and that in order to carry out these tactics they had now united with the Zinovievites and would set about the preparatory work.... It was clear that **since terrorism was the new position**, the preparatory work must consist in assembling and forming terrorist cadres. (1937 Trial 88.)

According to Radek's testimony here it was only later in 1932 that Trotsky explicitly used the word "terror." This corresponds with information from Valentin Astrov. In January 1937 Astrov testified that the Rightists formally decided to form a bloc with the Trotskyists and others at their August 26-September 1, 1932, conference. Only at this time was terror specifically approved as a method of struggle. The fact that in 1932 the main members of the bloc were the Trotskyists and the Zinovievists is confirmed in the letter from Sedov to Trotsky that Broué and Getty found in the Harvard Trotsky archive.

Radek:

When the question arose against whom terrorism should be directed, it concerned terrorism directed against the leading core of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U, and the Soviet government. And although not a single name was mentioned during this conversation, I ... did not have the slightest doubt that the acts were to be directed against Stalin and his immediate colleagues, against Kirov, Molotov, Voroshilov and Kaganovich. (89)

As a result, Radek testified, a plot to assassinate Sergei Kirov, Party leader in Leningrad, was hatched in April 1933.

RADEK: The conversation about Kirov was connected with the fact that in April 1933 Mrachkovsky asked me whether I could mention any Trotskyite in Leningrad who would undertake the organization of a terrorist group there.

VYSHINSKY: Against whom?

RADEK: Against Kirov, of course. (1937 Trial 90)

Kirov was actually killed in December 1934 by Leonid Nikolaev, a member of a clandestine terrorist Zinovievist opposition group in Leningrad.<sup>2</sup>

Getty surmised that the letter Radek said he had received from Trotsky in February or March 1932 while he, Radek, was in Geneva, “involved an attempt to persuade the addressee[s] to return to opposition.” Radek confirmed that Trotsky’s letter did contain such an appeal but that it closed by saying “We must raise the question of removing the leadership.”

The terms “remove” (*ustranit’*, *ubrat’*, *ustranenie*) are used several times by the defendants in the Moscow Trials.

Mrachkovsky goes on to say that already in 1931 this Trotskyite group openly discussed the question of terrorism.

I. N. Smirnov, who had visited Berlin, brought back instructions from Trotsky, which he received through Trotsky’s son, L. Sedov, to the following effect: “Until we put Stalin out of the way (“uberem”), we shall not be able to come back to power.”

VYSHINSKY: What do you mean by the expression: “Until we put Stalin out of the way (“uberem”)”?

MRACHKOVSKY: **Until we kill (“ub’iem”) Stalin.** At that very meeting, in the presence of Smirnov, myself, Ter-Vaganyan and Safonova, I was given the task of organizing a terrorist group, that is to say, to select

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<sup>2</sup> Though the fact is denied by Alla Kirilina and Matthew Lenoe, the two most recent scholars of the Kirov assassination, the evidence that Nikolaev was indeed a member of a clandestine Zinovievist group in Leningrad is unequivocal. See Furr Kirov.

reliable people. (1936 Trial 41; Russian original: *Pravda* August 20, 1936, p. 4)

VYSHINSKY: That is to say, you received a letter from Trotsky through Sedov and Shestov?

PYATAKOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: What was in this letter?

PYATAKOV: In this letter, which was written in German,...

VYSHINSKY: You know German fairly well?

PYATAKOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: And you write and read it quite fluently?

PYATAKOV: I do not write it quite grammatically, but I read it quite fluently and also converse.

VYSHINSKY: What did the letter say?

PYATAKOV: The letter, as I now recall, began as follows: "Dear friend, I am very glad that you have followed my request..." It went on to say that fundamental tasks were facing us, which he briefly formulated. **The first task was to use every means to remove ("ustranit") Stalin and his immediate assistants. Of course, "every means" was to be understood above all as violent means.** Secondly, in this same note Trotsky spoke of the necessity of uniting all anti-Stalin forces for this struggle. (1937 Trial 32; Russian edition 27-28)

We have already quoted Radek's statement that in 1932 Trotsky wrote him "we must raise the question of removing ("**ustraneni**i") the leadership... when I read the



words “removing (**“ustranenie”**) the leadership,” it became clear to me what Trotsky had in mind.” (1937 Trial 87; Russian edition 52)

Astrov confirmed that these were the terms used among the Rightists. It appears that all who used this term claimed that they understood it in the way Radek did – as meaning assassination. It was natural that they did so, for the only other means of “removing the leadership” was by winning a majority of the Central Committee – something they had been unable to do during the 1920s when they could campaign openly within the Party in the USSR. In a later chapter we discuss the “Remove Stalin” issue in more detail.

## Trotsky Denied Contact with Radek

If the letter that Trotsky unquestionably sent to Radek in Geneva in the spring of 1932 had been an innocent one Trotsky could have simply published it, or presented it to the Dewey Commission<sup>3</sup> as proof that Radek was falsifying the content of that letter. Trotsky and others presented a great many documents to the Commission which were retained in its exhibits.

Instead, Trotsky lied. He claimed that he had not been in touch with Radek or with Piatakov since 1929, when he had been exiled from the USSR. In his opening statement to the Dewey Commission Trotsky’s lawyer, Albert Goldman, stated:

The testimony will show that Trotsky has had no connection either direct or indirect with Radek since the time of his expulsion from the U.S.S.R., and that he has neither received from Radek nor written to him a single letter. (CLT 10)

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<sup>3</sup> The Dewey Commission held hearings in 1937, supposedly to investigate the charges against Trotsky and his son at the Moscow Trials. We discuss its proceedings in two later chapters.

Trotsky did indeed make that statement in his testimony.

GOLDMAN: Now, were you in communication with Radek, either directly or indirectly, since you left the Soviet Union, Mr. Trotsky?

TROTSKY: The only communications are represented by the quotations; no other communication.

GOLDMAN: You mean that you wrote about him, but you did not write to him?

TROTSKY: Never.

GOLDMAN: Did you receive any letters from him?

TROTSKY: Never.

GOLDMAN: Did you send letters to him through an intermediary?

TROTSKY: No. (CLT 116)

Goldman's assertion is false. Trotsky's testimony did not *show* that Trotsky had had no communication with Radek. Nor could he do so. Trotsky just *asserted* that he had not and the Dewey Commission accepted Trotsky's assertions.

Goldman was Trotsky's lawyer. Perhaps he assumed it was his duty to "defend" Trotsky — to interpret his client's statements and evidence in the most positive light for his client. That makes sense in a trial at law, where there would also be a prosecutor to set forth the argument *against* the defendant. It was up to the Dewey Commission members to perform this function. This they failed to do.

Throughout the Dewey Commission hearings Trotsky acted as though he would simply, gullibly, be believed with respect to charges made in the Moscow Trials. The very friendly Dewey Commission members did not call him on any of these attempts, as

any objective student, much less a prosecutor or “devil’s advocate,” certainly would have done.

## The Sten-Lominadze Group

At a meeting, which Astrof says took place between August 26 and September 1, 1932, the “leftists” Sten, Lominadze, Shatsky “and others” joined a bloc with the Rightists.

На первом же заседании конференции СЛЕПКОВ информировал присутствующих о том, что к нему на днях приходил СТЭН и от имени группы «леваков» предложил нам заключить с ними блок. СЛЕПКОВ вступил с ним в связь, сказав, что поставит этот вопрос на обсуждение актива организации. Вопрос этот обсуждался на втором заседании конференции, и было постановлено заключить блок с группой леваков (ЛОМИНАДЗЕ, СТЭН, ШАЦКИЙ и др.).

Translated:

At the very first session of the conference Slepko informed those present that a few days earlier Sten had come to him and in the name of the group of “Leftists” had proposed that we form a bloc with them. Slepko entered into contact with them, saying that he would put this question up for discussion among the active participants of the organization. This question was discussed at the second session of the conference and it was decided to conclude a bloc with the group of Leftists (Lominadze, Sten, Shatsky and others).

6) Подтвердить правильность принятой центром правых тактики блока с троцкистами и заключить блок с леваками (ЛОМИНАДЗЕ, СТЭН, ШАЦКИЙ).

Translated:

6) To confirm the correctness of the tactic, taken by the center of the Rightists, of a bloc with the Trotskyists and to conclude a bloc with the Leftists (Lominadze, Sten, Shatsky). (Lubianka 1937-1938 35-36)

This confirms what we know from Sedov's letter to Trotsky, where Sedov says that the Sten-Lominadze group is part of the bloc.

[The bloc] is organized. In it have entered the Zinovievites, the Sten-Lominadze group and the Trotskyists (former "[capitulators]."

There can be no doubt that these two completely independent sources – Sedov and Trotsky, on the one hand, and Astrov, on the other – are describing the formation of the same bloc and agree that it was formed in the second half of 1932. According to Broué the Rightists also entered the bloc with the Trotskyists.

Here the words bloc and "capitulators" have been physically cut out from the original with a knife or razor but have been added by Broué and are undoubtedly correct.<sup>4</sup> The quotation marks around the excised word "capitulators" are in the original. The "capitulators" had only pretended to capitulate to Stalin, as Broué recognized:

Lev Sedov called the Smirnov group either the "former capitulators" or the "Trotskiite capitulators." **Everybody had known**, from 1929 on, that people in the Smirnov group had not really capitulated but were trying to fool the apparatus, and were capable of organizing themselves as an Opposition within the party: the fact was so universally known that Andrés

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<sup>4</sup> Broué says nothing about these excisions except to note them. It seems likely that they were done by Broué's assistants. Trotskyists had a clear motive to hide evidence that Trotsky had lied. Broué's team had been the first to study the TA in detail after its opening in January 1980. The person or persons who had earlier "purged" the Trotsky Archive would have simply removed the whole document.

Nin, the Spaniard deported from the Soviet Union in August 1930, explained it openly to his German comrades of *Die permanente Revolution* who printed his declaration without apparent problem. (POS 104)

Broué does not say whom he means by “everybody” here. Stalin certainly did not know that Smirnov’s “capitulation” was phony. Between 1929 and his arrest in January 1933 Smirnov held high-ranking positions in the People’s Commissariat for Heavy Industry, as did Iurii Piatakov. They would never have obtained those or any other positions of influence and trust if their “capitulation” – disavowal of Trotskyism and pledge that they now supported the Party line – had been recognized as dishonest.

We have seen that both Sedov and Astrov mention the Sten-Lominadze group, which is also mentioned repeatedly in the First Moscow Trial of August 1936.

I .N .Smirnov stated: ...

“I admit that Ter-Vaganyan, who with my knowledge conducted negotiations with the Leftists and the Zinovievites in the name of the Trotskyite group, formed in 1932 a bloc with Kamenev, Zinoviev and **the Lominadze group** for joint struggle against the C.P.S.U. and the Soviet Government, and that L. Trotsky’s instructions regarding terror against the leaders of the C.P.S.U. and the Soviet state were made the basis of this bloc.” (Vol. XXIX, pp. 93, 104.) (1936 Trial 17)

The accused Mrachkovsky testified as follows:

“... In the middle of 1932, I. N. Smirnov put before our leading trio the question of the necessity of uniting our organization with the Zinoviev-Kamenev and **Sten-Lominadze groups** ... It was then decided to consult L. Trotsky on this question and to obtain his directions. L. Trotsky replied, agreeing to the

formation of a bloc on the condition that the groups uniting in the bloc would agree to the necessity of removing by violence the leaders of the C.P.S.U. and Stalin in the first place." (Vol. XVIII, pp. 44, 45) (1936 Trial 21-22)

Mrachkovsky then goes on to tell the Court about the activities of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist centre. The members of this centre were Zinoviev, Kamenev, **Lominadze**, Mrachkovsky, Ter-Vaganyan and others. (1936 Trial 44)

In connection with Mrachkovsky's testimony, the accused Ter-Vaganyan is examined. He admits that negotiations for the formation of a united Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist bloc were started as far back as June 1932 and that in the first stages of the negotiations he, Ter-Vaganyan, had served as intermediary between **Lominadze** and Kamenev, and between Smirnov and Zinoviev. (1936 Trial 45)

... Reingold says: "I can confirm that Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bakayev, Evdokimov, Smirnov, Mrachkovsky, Ter-Vaganyan and Sokolnikov were members of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite centre. Negotiations were carried on about joint activity with the 'Leftists': Shatsky, **Lominadze and Sten**, and also with the representatives of the Right deviation: Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsy." "The idea of the Zinovievites uniting with the Trotskyites," says Reingold, "arose as far back as 1931. Meeting Zinoviev in his apartment and in his villa that year, I heard him say that it was a pity that we had fallen out with Trotsky." Continuing his testimony, Reingold states that in discussing the general political situation, Zinoviev emphasized that

the economic position of the Soviet Union had become stronger and that it was absolutely no use talking about collapse. It was necessary to unite all the forces opposed to the present leadership. That is how the way was paved for a bloc with the Trotskyites. The basis for the union of the Trotskyites with the Zinovievites, emphasizes Reingold, was terrorism. (1936 Trial 54-55)

Continuing, Zinoviev says: "At the same time certain underground groups of the Right as well as of the so-called 'Left' trend, sought contact with me and Kamenev. Approaches were made by the remnants of the 'Workers' Opposition': by Shlyapnikov and Medvedyev. Approaches came from the groups of the so-called 'Leftists': that is, **Lominadze**, Shatsky, **Sten** and others. Approaches also came from the so-called 'individuals,' to whose numbers belonged Smilga, and to a certain extent, Sokolnikov. (1936 Trial 71-72)

TER-VAGANYAN: Yes, it was terrorist.

"In the autumn of 1931," continues Ter-Vaganyan, "my very close connection and friendship with **Lominadze** began. I met Lominadze frequently, and on these occasions we talked about a bloc." Continuing his testimony, Ter-Vaganyan says that at that period the Trotskyites began negotiations for union with the Zinovievites and the "Leftists," and that the terroristic stand was perfectly clear.

VYSHINSKY: When was that?

TER-VAGANYAN: After Smirnov came back from Berlin.

VYSHINSKY: At that period was the terroristic stand clear?

TER-VAGANYAN: Yes, it was clear, because the instructions had already been brought. (1936 Trial 110-111)

In clarifying the question as to the basis on which the bloc with the "Leftists" was formed, Comrade Vyshinsky puts a number of questions to the accused Smirnov. Smirnov's replies make it clear that the bloc was formed on a terroristic basis.

VYSHINSKY (to Smirnov): Did you organize the bloc or not?

SMIRNOV: I instructed Ter-Vaganyan to negotiate with **Lominadze**.

VYSHINSKY: What for?

SMIRNOV: For a union.

VYSHINSKY: Did the union take place?

SMIRNOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: With the "Leftists"?

SMIRNOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: Did you join the bloc?

SMIRNOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: At the time the instructions regarding terrorism were in operation?

SMIRNOV: Yes. (1936 Trial 111)



According to Valentin Astrov the bloc was formed around an agreement to use “terror” against Stalin and the Soviet leadership associated with him.

В начале 1932 года СЛЕПКОВ у него на квартире на совещании актива организации обосновывал необходимость заключения блока с троцкистами. Он говорил, что «троцкисты приняли хозяйственную платформу правых, а правые — внутрипартийную платформу троцкистов. Тактика террора объединяет нас. Разногласия между нами и троцкистами несущественны.”

Translated:

At the beginning of 1932 Slepков in a meeting of activists of the [Rightist] organization in his apartment was justifying the necessity of forming a bloc with the Trotskyists. He said that “the Trotskyists have accepted the economic platform of the Rights, and the Rights the Party platform of the Trotskyists. The tactic of terror unites us. The disagreements between us and the Trotskyists are secondary.” (Lubianka 1937-1938 32)

This is not mentioned in the documents discussed by Broué. This is not surprising, however, since the Trotsky archive has been purged. We shall return to the questions of Trotsky’s attitude towards terror and the post-Soviet verification of Astrov’s testimony.

## Contact with Other Oppositionists: The Case of Yuri Gaven

In 1990 Pierre Broué announced that he had discovered that Trotsky and Sedov had lied concerning their ties to some Party members inside the USSR. One of these figures was Yuri Petrovich Gavenis or, in its Russian form, Gaven, an Old Bolshevik of Latvian background. At the 1936 Moscow Trial Gaven was named by I.N.

Smirnov, one of the chief defendants and leader of the clandestine Trotskyists in the Soviet Union, as the person who had met with Trotsky in 1932 and received terrorist instructions from him – that is, instructions to assassinate Stalin and, perhaps, others.

Vyshinsky, quoting Smirnov:

“... I admit that the attitude which regarded terrorism as the only way of changing the situation in the Soviet Union was known to me from a conversation with Sedov in Berlin in 1931 as his own personal position. I admit that this line on terrorism was confirmed by L. Trotsky in 1932 in his personal instructions conveyed to me through Y. Gaven.” (1936 Trial 17)

VYSHINSKY: Another question to Smirnov. Do you corroborate the testimony of Mrachkovsky that in 1932 you received a reply from Trotsky through Gaven?

SMIRNOV: I received a reply from Trotsky through Gaven.

VYSHINSKY: And in addition, did you receive verbal information on the conversation with Trotsky?

SMIRNOV: Yes, also verbal conversation.

VYSHINSKY: You, Smirnov, confirm before the Supreme Court that in 1932 you received from Gaven the direction from Trotsky to commit acts of terrorism?

SMIRNOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: Against whom?

SMIRNOV: Against the leaders.

VYSHINSKY: Against which?

SMIRNOV: Stalin and others. (1936 Trial 42)

Smirnov stated that he had also had contact with Sedov but that Gaven had conveyed to him a letter from Trotsky himself.

VYSHINSKY: Was the letter you received through Gaven sent by Sedov or by Trotsky?

SMIRNOV: Gaven brought a letter from Trotsky. (1936 Trial 83-84)

VYSHINSKY: What then do you admit?

SMIRNOV: I admit that I belonged to the underground Trotskyite organization, joined the bloc, joined the centre of this bloc, met Sedov in Berlin in 1931, listened to his opinion on terrorism and passed this opinion on to Moscow. I admit that I received Trotsky's instructions on terrorism from Gaven and, although not in agreement with them, I communicated them to the Zinovievites through Ter-Vaganyan. (1936 Trial 85)

Smirnov insisted that though he passed on the instructions about terrorism to the Zinovievites and was a member of the center, or leadership of bloc, he "did no work" in it – a point Vyshinsky energetically contested. (85)

Smirnov returned to this topic in his last plea.

This was the mistake I made, which later grew into a crime. It induced me to resume contact with Trotsky, it induced me to seek connections with the Zinovievite group, it brought me into a bloc with the group of Zinovievites, into receiving instructions on terrorism from Trotsky through Gaven in November 1932, it brought me to terrorism. I communicated Trotsky's

instructions on terrorism to the bloc to which I belonged as a member of the centre. The bloc accepted these instructions and began to act. (1936 Trial 171)

Both Sedov and Trotsky denied any meetings with Gaven. But Sedov's letter confirms that Smirnov was telling the truth about the bloc with the Zinovievites. Broué found evidence that Trotsky did meet with Gaven and send a message back to the USSR with him.

Sedov:

Faut-il répéter que Trotsky n'a pas transmis par l'intermédiaire de I. Gaven, pas plus que par l'intermédiaire de quelqu'un d'autre, des instructions terroristes et ne s'est pas rencontré à l'étranger avec Gaven, pas plus qu'il ne s'est rencontré avec aucun des accusés? (Livre rouge 100)

Translated:

Is it necessary to say that Trotsky did not transmit through I. Gaven, any more than through anyone else, any kind of terrorist instructions and did not meet with Gaven abroad, any more than he met with a single one of the defendants?

Trotsky, at the Dewey Commission hearings:

GOLDMAN: Did you ever hear of a man by the name of Gaven?

TROTSKY: Yes.

GOLDMAN: Who is he?

TROTSKY: He is a Latvian Bolshevik. He, if I remember, gave all his sympathies at a certain time to the Opposition. As Holtzman, for example. In 1926 or 1927, he was connected for a time with Smilga, a

member of the Central Committee. But he disappeared from my eyes absolutely after 1926.

GOLDMAN: In the testimony of Mrachkovsky, and also Smirnov, there is a reference that you sent communications through Gaven to Smirnov about the necessity of killing Stalin.

TROTSKY: I don't know anything about it. No, it is an absolute falsehood. He is not among the defendants.

GOLDMAN: No, he is not. He is a witness.

TROTSKY: Not even a witness.

GOLDMAN: That's right.

TROTSKY: He disappeared.

GOLDMAN: It is simply mentioned by Mrachkovsky, by the defendant Mrachkovsky. (CLT 225-226)

In 1985 and again in 1990 Broué revealed that Trotsky and Sedov had lied.

Gaven est «Sorokine,” comme Holzman est «Orlov,” et Smirnov «Kolokoltsev,” dans la correspondance de Sedov et de son père.

Translated:

Gaven is “Sorokin,” as Holzman is “Orlov,” and Smirnov is “Kolokoltsev,” in the correspondence between Sedov and his father.<sup>5</sup>

In another article (published in English) Broué states:

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<sup>5</sup> “Compléments à un article sur les trotskystes en U.R.S.S,” CahLT 24 (1985), 69.

In 1936 Trotskii and Sedov denied having any contact with him [Gaven]. In fact, they had. Allowed to go to Germany in order to receive medical care, Gavenis wrote to Trotskii and got an interview with Lev Sedov, who wrote an account of it. Gavenis gave information about the bloc, supplementing Holzman's. He also gave information about his own "O"-group (probably Osinskii) and seems to have agreed to bring back to the Soviet Union a message to the Trotskiite group itself – in spite of his worry about the latter having been infiltrated by the OGPU. (POS 99)

Broué does not identify the letter or letters either in the Sedov Papers at the Hoover Institution or in the Trotsky Archive at Harvard in which Trotsky and his son discuss Gaven.<sup>6</sup> In Broué's 1988 biography *Trotsky* we read only this:

Gaven, l'ancien «émissaire» de Trotsky, est fusillé sur une civière.<sup>7</sup>

Translated:

Gaven, Trotsky's old "emissary," was shot on a stretcher.

The detail of being shot "on a litter" is taken from Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, a completely unreliable book full of Khrushchev-era falsifications. This is only a rumor, though treated as "fact" by Broué, Medvedev, and Conquest. It is interesting to note how the

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<sup>6</sup> Broué suggests that the information that Sedov did meet with Gaven is in a letter in the Hoover collection, but does not give further details. Cf. Broué, *Trotsky*. Ch. XLIV note 34: "34 Lettre de Gaven à Moscou et rapport de Sedov à Trotsky sur son entretien avec Gaven, A.H.F.N. Également, P. Broué « Compléments sur les trotskystes en U.R.S.S. », CahLT, n° 24, décembre 1985, p. 69." But this final citation does not identify the letter. The abbreviation A.H.F.N. used by Broué means "Archive Hoover Fonds Nicolaevsky" – Hoover Archive, Nicolaevsky Collection. Broué does not identify any specific letter. In POS 111, note 4, Broué announces his plan to publish all the Trotsky-Sedov correspondence, but this project was never realized.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter 56. At [http://www.marxists.org/francais/broue/works/1988/00/PB\\_tky\\_56.htm](http://www.marxists.org/francais/broue/works/1988/00/PB_tky_56.htm)

story becomes elaborated. Medvedev writes: "In the thirties he was carried on a stretcher to be shot." Conquest paraphrases Medvedev's account. But Broué states flatly that Gaven was actually *on* a stretcher when he was shot.<sup>8</sup>

In the same chapter of his biography of Trotsky Broué also accepts Medvedev's account that Stalin had Sergo Ordzhonikidze assassinated – a story for which there is no evidence at all and which has long been abandoned even by anticommunists who insist that Sergo committed suicide. But, as Vladimir Bobrov has recently demonstrated, this "suicide story" is also a falsehood invented during the Khrushchev era. There is no reason to doubt the official story that appeared in the Soviet press the day afterwards, that Ordzhonikidze had died of a heart attack.<sup>9</sup>

Broué writes:

The correspondence between Trotskii and Sedov demonstrates that father and son were astounded at the beginning of the trial when they saw that Smirnov and Holzman, already guilty in Stalin's eyes, did not content themselves with confessing the truth but accused themselves of fantastic crimes. (POS 99)

It would be important to see the text of such letters, as they might constitute evidence that Smirnov's and Gol'tsman's testimony was false. But in this article Broué neither quotes the text nor cites the specific letters in which this exchange supposedly took place. In his biography of Trotsky Broué identifies the document as Harvard

<sup>8</sup> Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge: the origins and consequences of Stalinism*. (New York, 1971), p. 273. This is Robert Conquest's only source for this "fact" as well: *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 104 and n. 159, p. 500.

<sup>9</sup> Vladimir L. Bobrov, "Taina smerti Ordzhonikidze," at <http://vif2ne.ru/nvz/forum/archive/238/238967.htm> ; fully footnoted Russian version at <http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/bobrov-ordzhon08.html> ; English translation at [msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/bobrov-ordzhon08eng.html](http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/bobrov-ordzhon08eng.html) See also Furr, Khrushchev Lied 116-118.

4868. (Broué, Trotsky, Ch. LIII n.15) Rogovin, who also cites it, puts it in context:

После появления первых сообщений о процессе 16-ти Седов отправил с нарочным письмо Троцкому. **Опасением того, что оно может быть каким-то образом перехвачено**, объясняются некоторые особенности этого письма (обращение к адресату на "вы" и т. д.).

Translated:

After the appearance of the first announcements about the Trial of the Sixteen [the August 1936 Zinoviev-Kamenev Trial], Sedov sent a letter by special courier to Trotsky. **Fear that it might somehow be seized** explains some of the peculiarities of this letter (using the formal "vy," etc.). (Rogovin 1937 64)

Therefore we cannot consider this letter as evidence that Trotsky and Sedov really were "astounded," as Broué claims. A letter written with a special style for fear it might be intercepted is, obviously, a letter that does not reveal anything secret, as actual terrorist communications would.

Judging from the number of citations to the Harvard and Hoover Trotsky archives in his books Rogovin appears to have had extensive access to both. Yet he cites only a letter in which Sedov discusses what he and Trotsky should admit and what they should conceal. This would not constitute evidence that they thought Smirnov's and Gol'tsman's testimony false.

The question is not whether Smirnov brought a letter from Trotsky to the Trotskyists within the USSR – all agree that he did -- but whether that letter contained terrorist instructions. Broué and Rogovin deny this but neither has any evidence to support his denial. And without evidence, how could they possibly know this? This is their Trotskyist bias speaking. Neither Broué nor Rogovin makes any attempt to maintain that objectivity without which no



historian's work is of any value. This ruins their works as historical studies.

We have evidence that Trotsky and Sedov lied when they publicly claimed that Trotsky had not met with Gaven. Gaven had indeed met with Sedov and, in Broué's words, Gaven "seems to have agreed to bring back to the Soviet Union a message to the Trotskyite group itself." Smirnov confessed that this letter, which he dates to November 1932, contained terrorist instructions.

The volume *Politbiuro i Lev Trotskii t.2* published in 2013 contains many interrogations and statements in which Gaven's role is exactly as Smirnov outlines in his trial testimony – that is, that Gaven carried a message from Trotsky that "terror" must be the new tactic for the opposition. We will examine these very important materials in the second volume of the present work.

## Trotsky's Contacts with Trotskyists inside the USSR

### Contact with Sokol'nikov

TROTSKY: Sokolnikov has original ideas. He has a very inventive mind, and that is the reason why he is not fit, he does not fit into the bureaucratic régime.

GOLDMAN: Did you ever have any communication from him when you left Russia?

TROTSKY: Never.

GOLDMAN: Did you in any way communicate with him since you left Russia?

TROTSKY: No.

GOLDMAN: Either directly or indirectly?

TROTSKY: No. (CLT 123)

We can now confirm that the following statement made by Sokol'nikov in his final statement at trial, is false:

I can add nothing to the information and the evaluations which were here given by the members of the centre – Pyatakov and Radek. I think that these evaluations have been sufficiently frank, and I fully share them. But I cannot add anything of my own, because **I was not in direct communication with Trotsky, I was not directly connected with him**, and received information through third persons. (1937 Trial 555.)

Getty found a certified mail receipt of a letter to Sokol'nikov in London that Trotsky mailed sometime during 1932. Assuming the letter reached him – a similar letter did reach Radek – it follows that Sokol'nikov falsely denied having been in contact with Trotsky in 1932, although Radek admitted he had received Trotsky's letter in the same year. We don't know why Sokol'nikov did this.

### Contact with Piatakov

Trotsky also specifically denied any contact with Piatakov since 1928:

TROTSKY: He capitulated openly, publicly; he capitulated in February, 1928. He was the first "Trotskyite" who capitulated publicly.

GOLDMAN: And after that did you have any correspondence with him at all?

TROTSKY: None.

GOLDMAN: Either when you were in the Soviet Union or outside of the Soviet Union?

TROTSKY: Exactly. (CLT 117)

As we have seen, Trotsky also denied any contact with Radek. We know Trotsky was lying because Getty found the certified mail

receipt of a letter to Radek in the Trotsky archive. There is no such evidence in the archive of letters to Piatakov. However, we must be mindful of the fallacy of the argument from silence. "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" – especially since Getty discovered that the Harvard Trotsky Archive has been purged.

### Sedov's "Slip of the Tongue"

But Holmström has uncovered other evidence of Trotsky-Piatakov contact in the pages of *Het Volk*, the newspaper of the Dutch social-democratic party Arbeiderspartij. On January 28, 1937, *Het Volk* published an account of an interview with Trotsky's son and principal political assistant Leon Sedov. In it Sedov says:

Dit tweede proces is veel beter dan het eerste in elkaar gezet. De tegenstanders worden nu niet voornamelijk als belagers van Stalin, als politieke tegenstanders voorgesteld. En juist het omgekeerde is erder het geval. De beschuldigten in het eerste proces waren het in hun hart niet eens met Stalin, al capituleerden zij dan ook vor hem. Zij waren om hun critiek en politieke activiteit jaren voor het begin van het proces verbannen of gearresteerd: Smirnow 3 ½ jaar tevoren, Zinowjew en Kamenew anderhalf jaar voordien. Radek en Pjatakow waren echter tot het laatste toe aanhangers van Stalin en waren zijn ideeën volledig toegedaan. Met hen hebben de Trotskiïsten veel minder in verbindinging gestaan dan met de anderen. Om het precies uit te drukken: in geen enkel verband.

Translated:

The second trial has been organized much better than the first. The defendants are now not presented as enemies of Stalin, as political opponents. Just the opposite is clearly true. The defendants in the first trial were in their hearts not in agreement with Stalin,

even though they capitulated to him. They had been exiled or arrested years before the start of the trial for their criticism and political activity: Smirnov 3 ½ years earlier, Zinoviev and Kamenev one and a half years before. Radek and Piatakov were two of the last supporters of Stalin and were totally committed to his ideas. The Trotskyists have had much less contact with them than with the others. To be more exact: no contact at all.<sup>10</sup>

This interview, in a provincial edition of the newspaper, was noticed by the Communist press, which called Sedov's remark a "slip of the tongue." (*Arbeideren*, Oslo, February 5, 1937; *Arbejderbladet*, Copenhagen, February 12, 1937.) Thanks to Getty we now know that the Communist press was correct. Sedov's first remark, about "much less contact" – that is, *some* contact – was accurate: Trotsky had indeed been in touch with Radek.

Sedov tried to withdraw his "slip" about Radek and Piatakov. But he did not even attempt to retract the information that preceded it, that "the Trotskyists" had indeed been in contact with "the others": Smirnov, Zinoviev, and Kamenev. Broué agrees that Gol'tsman carried at least one letter from Trotsky to Smirnov. Sedov's 1932 letter in invisible ink to his father about the bloc revealed that Zinoviev and Kamenev had joined the bloc. This is perhaps enough to show that Trotsky, or at any rate "the Trotskyists," had indeed been in touch with them. Moreover, unless they had been in touch with them how could Sedov or Trotsky have known that the defendants at the First Moscow Trial, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Smirnov, Mrachkovsky, and others, "were in their hearts not in agreement with Stalin"?

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<sup>10</sup> "Het proces te Moskou. Wie Niet Wil Bekennen Al Doodgeschoten? Trotski Jr. uit zijn opvatting." ("The Moscow Trial. Not all who want to confess are shot? Trotsky Jr. about its conception.") *Het Volk*, Haarlem edition, January 28, 1937, p. 5. My thanks to Sven-Eric Holmström for providing me with this article.

The *Het Volk* interview would have revealed a great deal if anyone had taken it seriously. But the capitalist media did not notice or publicize Sedov's slip. Only the communist press caught it. The Dewey Commission and Trotsky himself ignored it. No one else paid it any attention. Trotsky was lucky.

In 2015 we obtained a part of Piatakov's NKVD investigation file. Among other materials it includes a long statement Piatakov wrote to Ezhov in December 1936. In it Piatakov goes into considerable detail about his own oppositional activities. It includes a lengthy account of Piatakov's secret visit in December 1935 to Trotsky in Norway, in which Piatakov outlines in some depth Trotsky's views and instructions. In a future volume I will include a careful study of this statement and an English translation of it.

## Contact with Preobrazhensky

In the Second and Third Moscow Trials, defendants named Evgeny A. Preobrazhensky as one of the clandestine Trotskyist members of the bloc. It appears that Trotsky did not explicitly state that he had not been in touch with Preobrazhensky. Getty discovered that Trotsky had written Preobrazhensky in 1932: one of the certified mail return receipts in the TA is of a letter to Preobrazhensky.

## Contacts with Gol'tsman

At the August 1936 Moscow Trial defendant Gol'tsman – his name is often Anglicized as "Holtzman" – claimed that he had met with Trotsky's son Sedov "many times." He further claimed that, at Sedov's suggestion, he had travelled to Copenhagen in late November 1932, when Trotsky was visiting that city to make a public speech, and met with both Sedov and Trotsky. This alleged visit is known as the "Hotel Bristol" affair.

At the Dewey Commission hearings in April 1937 in Mexico Trotsky firmly denied any contact with Gol'tsman.

GOLDMAN: Have you in any way had any communications with any Holtzman since you left Russia?

TROTSKY: Never.

GOLDMAN: Directly or indirectly?

TROTSKY: Never. (CLT 91)

However, in late 1936 Sedov had already admitted meeting with Gol'tsman. In Chapter 14 of the *Red Book* the French reads "these meetings"; the English, "this meeting."

Par tout le caractère de **ces rencontres**, il est absolument évident que Goltzman ne reçut ni «instructions» ni lettre, et qu'il n'en demanda pas non plus. (*Livre rouge* 98)

Translated:

From the entire character of **this meeting**, it is absolutely clear that Holtzman received neither "instructions" nor a letter, and did not ask for any either.

Trotsky was compelled to send a correction to the Dewey Commission on June 29, 1937, noting this indirect contact. We will return to it below.

In the third volume of his biography of Trotsky Isaac Deutscher wrote as follows:

Lyova and Goltzman **often** met and discussed developments in the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> (165)

Deutscher says these meetings occurred "early in the autumn" of 1931. This is an error. Getty and Sedov himself agree that contact with Gol'tsman occurred in the fall of 1932. Getty says "sometime in October" (TIE 28); Sedov "in the fall of 1932" ("en automne 1932," *Livre rouge* 97)

In the footnote appended to the sentence above Deutscher wrote:

This account is based on Lyova's correspondence with his father, and on his deposition to the French Commission of Inquiry which, in 1937, conducted investigations preparatory to the Mexican counter-trial. *The Archives*, Closed Section.

Deutscher's account agrees with what Gol'tsman testified at trial: "Thus I met him six or eight times in the course of four months." (1936 Trial 100) According to the published account of Sedov's testimony to the French Commission of Inquiry to which Deutscher refers Sedov said:

Je ne suis pas à même de préciser combien de fois j'ai rencontré Holzman, mais il ne fait pas de doute que je l'ai rencontré plusieurs fois.<sup>11</sup>

Translated:

I cannot now be precise about the number of meetings I had with Holzman, but there's no doubt that I met him several times.

In his *Red Book* Sedov suggests that he had only one meeting with Gol'tsman, although there is a bit of vacillation in the French edition. The Russian version, published in Trotsky's *Biulleten' Oppozitsii* No. 52, uses the singular – *vstrecha* (genitive singular *vstrechi*):

Из всего характера *встречи* совершенно очевидно, что никаких "инструкций" или писем Гольцман не получал...

The English version also uses the singular here:

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<sup>11</sup> "Sedov et V. Serge devant la commission rogatoire." CahLT No. 41 (July 1990), p. 89.

From the entire character of this *meeting*, it is absolutely clear that Holtzman received neither "instructions" nor a letter...

The French version, published as *Livre rouge sur le process de Moscou*, equivocates. At the passage above it uses the plural one time, "these meetings":

Par tout le caractère de *ces rencontres*, il est absolument évident que Goltzman ne reçut ni «instructions» ni lettre,...  
(98)

Translated:

By the whole nature of these meetings, it is absolutely obvious that Goltzman did not receive either "instructions" or a letter...

But the referent is vague because the meeting between Sedov and Smirnov had been discussed immediately before this. So the term "these meetings" could be construed as referring to meetings with both Smirnov and Gol'tsman and not necessarily more than a single meeting with Gol'tsman. Furthermore, Sedov immediately reverts to the singular, unmistakably indicating a single meeting:

Main comme pour les buts de la Guépéou, *cette entrevue* de Goltzman avec Sédov ne donnait rien...  
(98)

Translated:

But since for the goals of the G.P.U. *this interview* of Goltzman with Sedov did not give anything...

The Russian version also uses the singular here (*svidanie*):

Но так как для целей ГПУ *это свидание* Гольцмана с Седовым ничего не давало,...<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Biulleten' Opozitsii* No. 52 (октябрь 1936), «Связь Троцкого с подсудимыми»,



...while the English also uses the singular “meeting” instead of the more technically correct word “interview.”

The French version is the only one that even gives a hint that there was more than one meeting between Sedov and Gol'tsman before reverting to the singular. But which is the original? The Russian version was published in the October 1936 issue of the *Biulleten'* with a note that it is a translation from French:

(Перевод с французского. Л. Троцкий, интернированный в Норвегии, лишен возможности писать по-русски).

Translated:

(A translation from the French. L. Trotsky, interned in Norway, is deprived of the possibility of writing in Russian.)

On the face of it this is absurd: Trotsky claims that while in Norway he is not permitted to write in Russian but, therefore, somehow he is allowed to write in French? A possible explanation for this is that Sedov had had to promise the French authorities that he would stay aloof from politics during this stay in France. But Trotsky had been obliged to make a similar pledge to the Norwegian authorities. Evidently Sedov and Trotsky soon decided that claiming that Sedov wrote the *Red Book* would not endanger the status of either of them.

The French edition, dated October 28, 1936, by Sedov, states that the French is a revised version of the Russian text:

Il a déjà paru en langue russe, comme article rédactionnel dans le *Bulletin de l'Opposition*; l'auteur l'a revu pour l'édition française. (7)

Translated:

It has already appeared in Russian as an editorial article in the *Bulletin of the Opposition*; the author has reviewed it for the French edition.

This vacillation concerning the number of meetings between Sedov and Gol'tsman in a text that has admittedly been revised and translated numerous times suggests that Sedov and Trotsky had not decided whether to admit to more than a single meeting. At the Dewey Commission hearing Sedov used the singular only (*rencontre*) until directly asked how many times he had met with Gol'tsman.

When questioned about the notes to which he kept referring, he said that they pertained only to the first meeting. The questioner did not pursue the matter of what Sedov and Gol'tsman had discussed during their other meetings.

This was – to say the least – curious and unfortunate, since it left the main issue completely unexplored. We know from the Harvard Trotsky Archive that Gol'tsman had been the “informer” (*informator*) who had been the mediator between I.N. Smirnov and Sedov. It was Gol'tsman who had brought Smirnov's idea of a bloc to Sedov, who then obtained his father's permission.

Broué says that Smirnov brought “**at least** one document from the pen of one of the leaders of the groups in the bloc”:

L'«informateur» a incontestablement apporté à Sedov **au moins un** document de la plume d'un des dirigeants des groupes constituant le bloc... (Broué 1980, 17.)

Translated:

The messenger had certainly brought to Sedov **at least one** document from the pen of one of the leaders of the groups that comprised the bloc...

Sedov and Trotsky admitted only to this document. Even Broué suspected there may have been more. Given the plurality of

meetings between Sedov and Gol'tsman and Sedov's reluctance to discuss them, Broué's suspicion is reasonable.

At the 1936 trial Gol'tsman confessed to bringing "Trotsky's personal instructions to organize terrorist acts" back to the bloc. (1936 Trial 40) Gol'tsman testified that Trotsky had used the term "remove Stalin," saying this could only be done by terrorism (i.e. violence). A turn to "terror," together with the discussions necessary to justify it in Marxist terms, at the present conjuncture, and perhaps arrangements for Gol'tsman to hear it from Trotsky directly, might well have occupied those several mysterious meetings.

It appears that Sedov had gone into the hearing intending to claim that he had met Gol'tsman only once. Then, when asked directly, he changed his mind and decided to admit to the multiple meetings. In effect Sedov counted on the Dewey Commission not to follow up on this matter and probe him about what was discussed in the other meetings, and they did not. The Dewey Commission's final report, *Not Guilty*, states that after Sedov's first meeting with Gol'tsman there were "several subsequent meetings." (Not Guilty 61) Sedov's two accounts contradict one another, and the earlier account in the *Livre rouge*, as well as all the text in the English *Red Book* and that in the Russian *Biulleten' Oppozitsii*, are false.

In his book Deutscher did not mention that Gol'tsman had brought a proposal for a bloc of Trotskyists with Zinovievists and others. But we know that he did; both Getty (TIE 28; Origins 119) and Broué (1980) discuss this. Broué published an excerpt from a letter of Sedov to Trotsky (1980 36-37) and the full text of a letter of Trotsky's to Sedov (1980 35-36) in which Gol'tsman's role is discussed.

This is one of the matters we know Sedov refused to disclose to the French Commission. Like Trotsky, Sedov lied to the Dewey Commission as well as in the *Red Book*. Sedov and Trotsky both denied sending terrorist directives through Gol'tsman. Of course

they would deny doing this whether they had done so or not. Trotsky and Sedov lied when they thought it was expedient to do so. They had to lie, as every conspirator must. But it does mean that we cannot believe what they said or wrote.

# Chapter 5. Non-Soviet Evidence – Other Lies By Trotsky

## The “Hotel Bristol” story in the First Moscow Trial

At the First Moscow Trial Gol'tsman testified as follows:

In November I again telephoned Sedov and we met once again.

Sedov said to me: “As you are going to the U.S.S.R., it would be a good thing if you came with me to Copenhagen where my father is.”

VYSHINSKY: That is to say?

HOLTZMAN: That is to say, Trotsky.

VYSHINSKY: Did you go?

HOLTZMAN: I agreed, but I told him that we could not go together for reasons of secrecy. I arranged with Sedov to be in Copenhagen within two or three days, to put up at the Hotel Bristol and meet him there. I went to the hotel straight from the station and in the lounge met Sedov. About 10 a.m. we went to Trotsky. (1936 Trial 100)

Shortly after the trial the fact was widely publicized that there was no “Hotel Bristol” in Copenhagen. Trotsky utilized this fact to attack the credibility of the trial itself. Testimony about the “Hotel Bristol” issue took up a good deal of space in the Dewey Commission hearings.

In his 2008 article “New Evidence Concerning the ‘Hotel Bristol’ Question in the First Moscow Trial of 1936” Sven-Eric Holmström examined this issue carefully. Holmström suggested that Gol'tsman could have misidentified the Grand Hotel Copenhagen

as the “Bristol” because of the large sign beside its door for the adjacent “Bristol” Konditori (café and pastry shop). We refer interested readers to this article rather than repeat here the quotations and documentation carefully amassed and reproduced by Holmström.

In view of the many lies that Trotsky and Sedov told concerning the Moscow Trials it is interesting to note that they did not bother to get the correct story about the former Hotel Bristol. Trotsky said that “the Hotel Bristol was demolished in 1917,”<sup>1</sup> “torn down as far back as 1917.”<sup>2</sup> During the Dewey Commission hearings Albert Goldman, Trotsky’s lawyer, stated that the Hotel Bristol “was burned down in 1917.” (CLT 167) But the Hotel Bristol had neither been torn down nor burned in 1917. It was sold to an insurance company, which maintained the building. It is hard to understand why Trotsky and his supporters never bothered to verify what had in fact happened to the Hotel Bristol.<sup>3</sup>

## The “Hotel Bristol” story in the *Bulletin of the Opposition*

Holmström has shown that Esther Field, one of the witnesses at the Dewey Commission hearings, lied about the relative positions of the Grand Hotel Copenhagen and the Konditori Bristol, testifying that they were not next to each other when she had visited them in 1932.<sup>4</sup> Since her testimony was designed to help Trotsky, Trotsky must have known about her lie in advance. Perhaps he had even asked her to lie for him.

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<sup>1</sup> “An Interview for Americans,” (January 1937). WLT 1936-1937, 97.

<sup>2</sup> “A New Moscow Amalgam,” (January 21, 1937), *ibid.* 125.

<sup>3</sup> See Holmström for all the appropriate documentation. On this point see p. 13, note.

<sup>4</sup> Sven-Eric Holmström, ““New Evidence Concerning the ‘Hotel Bristol’ Question in the First Moscow Trial of 1936.” *Cultural Logic* 2008. At <http://clogic.eserver.org/2008/Holmstrom.pdf>

Three months after his testimony to the Dewey Commission Trotsky published yet another version of the “Hotel Bristol” story in which he contradicted this earlier account. In an article titled “Hotel Bristol” published in July 1937 but dated March 13, 1937, Trotsky wrote:

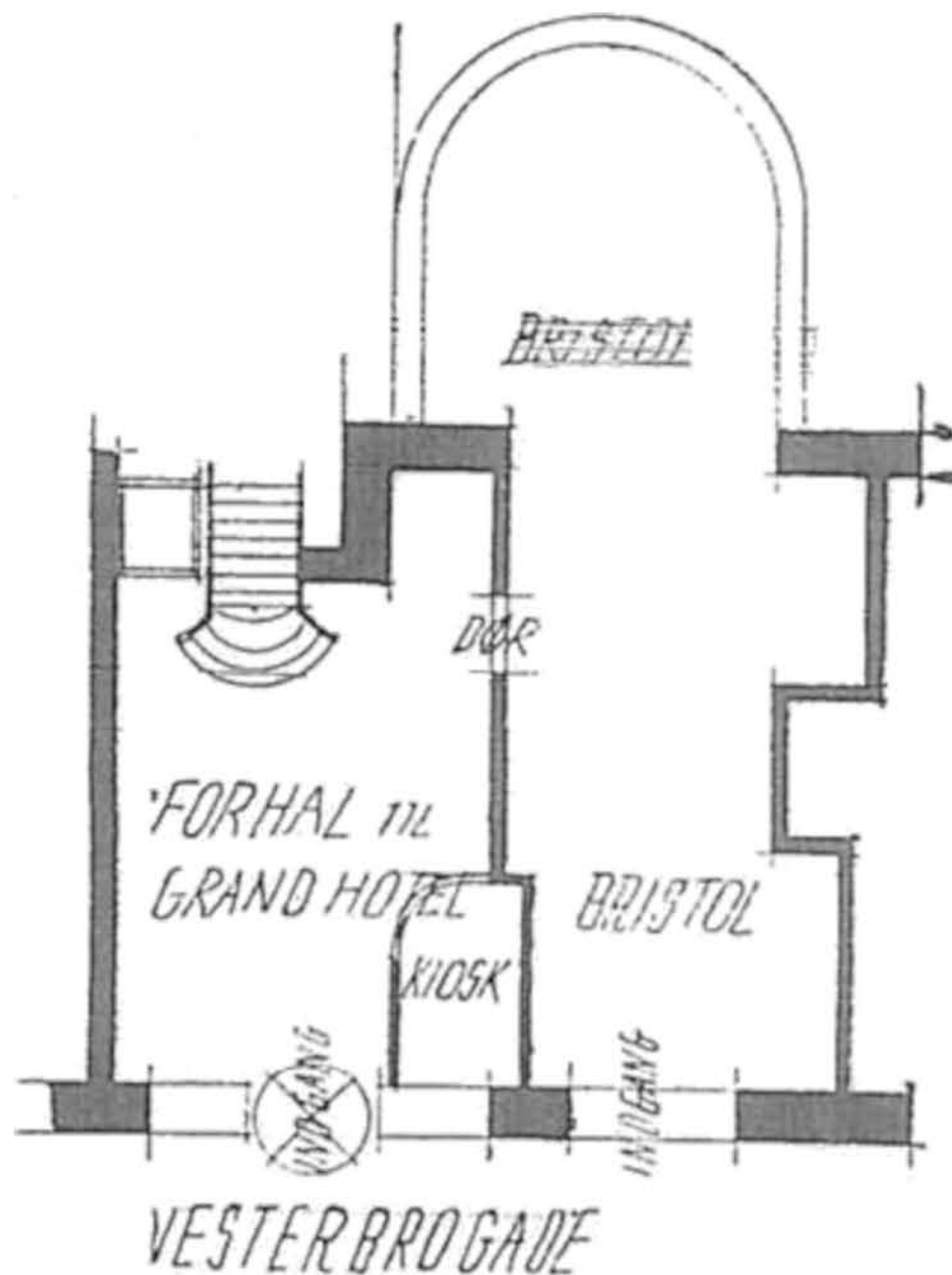
Only in February of this year the press of the Comintern made a discovery that saved them: true, there is no Hotel Bristol in Copenhagen, but there is a Bristol pastry-shop [NOTE: *konditerskaia*, in Danish *Konditori*], which is attached to the hotel by one wall. True, this hotel is called “Grand Hotel Copenhagen,” but it is a hotel. True, a pastry-shop is not a hotel, but it is called “Bristol.” According to Gol’tzman’s words the meeting took place in the vestibule of the hotel. True, the pastry-shop has no vestibule. But the hotel, which is not called Bristol, does have a vestibule. **In addition it must be added that, as is clear even from the drawings printed in the Comintern press, the entrances of the pastry-shop and the hotel are on different streets.** Where then did the meeting take place? In the vestibule without the Bristol, or in the Bristol, without the vestibule?

In one respect this version is more accurate than Trotsky’s account to the Dewey Commission. There Trotsky’s witnesses Esther Field and A. Vikelsø Jensen testified that the Bristol Konditori was *not* adjacent to the Grand Hotel Copenhagen. Holmström has proven this to be untrue. Here Trotsky admitted that they were indeed attached to each other.

The only “Comintern press” account we know of is that of the Danish Communist Party newspaper *Arbejderbladet*. It printed a single drawing – Trotsky mentions “drawings.” As Trotsky admits, the drawing clearly shows that the pastry-shop and hotel are adjacent. However, Trotsky added the curious, and false, statement that the entrances are “on different streets.” This explains why Trotsky did not refer specifically to the drawing he mentioned,



much less reproduce it. The drawing shows that the entrances are side by side and on the same street, Vesterbrogade. Trotsky's readers would have had no way of locating the drawing from the vague description Trotsky gave.<sup>5</sup>



**Revolving door entrance to hotel beside entrance to Bristol Konditeri, showing door connecting Bristol Konditori to hotel. From Holmström 2009 (*Arbejderbladet* January 29, 1937, p. 8)**

Trotsky also failed to mention that the drawing in question shows an interior passageway between the pastry-shop and hotel. One could access the hotel and its vestibule by entering the pastry-shop door, the one immediately beside the large “Bristol” sign. However, it is not necessary to assume Gol’tsman did that.

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<sup>5</sup> Holmström has confirmed this fact with great care. The drawing in question is reproduced on p. 21. Holmström’s whole article repays careful study.



Holmström has verified that the entrances of *both* pastry-shop and hotel were also right next to each other, and that it would have been natural for anyone to confuse the large sign “Bristol” with the name of the hotel and go directly into that entrance.

Not only are Trotsky’s two accounts of the “Hotel Bristol” matter both false; they also contradict each other. Trotsky did not bring his two mutually contradictory versions into agreement. He could easily have done so: the second version was not published till three months after the Dewey Commission hearings. He could also have sent a letter of correction to the Dewey Commission as he did about his indirect contact with Gol’tsman (CLT 592-3). But he did neither.

## Why did Trotsky lie about “Bristol”?

Trotsky took a terrible risk in permitting both stories to stand. Once again he was lucky. Aside from the communist press no one seems to have noticed the contradiction between Trotsky’s two versions. Had they done so Trotsky’s Dewey Commission testimony and Trotsky’s general truthfulness would have been called into question at a crucial time. Why did Trotsky take such a risk?

Trotsky had certainly been in Copenhagen at the end of November 1932. He tried to prove Sedov had not been able to get to Copenhagen, even though Sedov’s wife did manage to do so (Not Guilty 88). In light of Trotsky’s other falsifications to the Dewey Commission there is no reason to simply “accept” Sedov’s alibi. But even if Sedov was not in Copenhagen, why did Trotsky not stop there? That would have been enough to refute Gol’tsman’s claim that he had met Sedov in the vestibule of the “Bristol Hotel.” Why did Trotsky proceed to falsify the relative positions of the Bristol Konditori and the Grand Hotel Copenhagen (Esther Field’s testimony to the Dewey Commission), and then, three months later, proceed to publish an account in *Bulletin of the Opposition* that both contradicted this version and also contained yet another falsehood?

Why tell a lie when the truth is on your side? It is very unlikely that Trotsky would take such a risk, tell falsehoods that could easily have been discovered, unless he were trying to hide something important. So let us suppose Trotsky had something to hide. The question is: What? The most obvious thing Trotsky could possibly be hiding that was worth the risk of being caught in a serious lie was that he had in fact met with Gol'tsman much as Gol'tsman had testified.

But why did Trotsky not admit to meeting with Gol'tsman? Apparently Sedov did not have a prepared story ready for the Dewey Commission. As we have seen, Sedov at first lied to the Commission by saying that he and Gol'tsman had met only once. Only at the last moment of his testimony did he change his mind and admit to a number of meetings with Gol'tsman. Sedov was only able to get away with remaining silent about the content of these subsequent meetings through the complaisant attitude towards him on the part of the Dewey Commission members, who simply let the matter drop. Aggressive questioning of Sedov concerning the contents of his numerous other meetings with Gol'tsman might well have turned up something interesting.

We have already suggested a reason for Sedov's insistence, which he maintained until almost the very end of his Dewey Commission testimony, that he had met only once with Gol'tsman in Berlin. Gol'tsman testified that he met with Sedov "six or eight times in the course of four months." So many meetings over such a period of time would certainly suggest that a good deal of business was being conducted. Trotsky and Sedov had admitted only that Gol'tsman had delivered an article on the economic situation in the USSR that Trotsky published in the *Bulletin* in November 1932. Sedov stated that this information had been conveyed during the first meeting, which he initially said had been the only meeting.

At the 1936 Moscow trial Gol'tsman testified that he brought back terrorist instructions from Trotsky. This would explain the numerous meetings with Sedov. It would also explain the subsequent meeting of Gol'tsman with Trotsky in Copenhagen in November, 1932. As he testified during the First Moscow Trial of

August 1936, Smirnov did not consider Sedov to be an “authority.” He wanted to get the instructions for terror via Gol’tsman from Trotsky himself.

There appears to be no explanation for the fact that Trotsky took the risk of flagrantly lying about the “Bristol” affair when he could have simply told the truth without endangering anyone – unless the meeting was not an innocent one, unless “something happened” that Trotsky did not wish brought to light. In any case, Trotsky’s denial of meeting with Gol’tsman in Copenhagen cannot be trusted. Broué and Getty have established that Trotsky lied whenever he considered it in his interest to do so.

Did Gol’tsman meet with *Sedov* first, as he claimed? We do not know. None of the evidence that Trotsky submitted in an effort to prove that his son was not in Copenhagen is definitive. Neither is Gol’tsman’s unsupported word. We know that Trotsky lied very frequently both when he wrote about the Moscow Trials and about other issues as well. But that does not in itself mean that he was lying here.

Ongoing research by Sven-Eric Holmström suggests the possibility that Gol’tsman may have said he had met with Sedov in order to conceal the identity of some person or persons he had really met with but whose identity he wished to conceal. Everyone already knew Sedov was his father’s chief representative, so perhaps Gol’tsman named Sedov instead of another person. According to Holmström, who has been researching this question for years now, something like that appears to be involved in the case of Iurii Piatakov’s alleged flight to Norway to meet personally with Trotsky in December 1935.

We can establish that some of the other Moscow Trial defendants lied deliberately to the court. For example, at the January 1937 trial Karl Radek let slip the name of Marshal Tukhachevsky, but was then quick to assure the court that he knew Tukhachevsky to be a completely loyal Party member. This was of course untrue and Radek had to know it – for Bukharin knew it, and Bukharin

was closely in touch with Radek. Again, Bukharin claimed he had “made a clean breast of things” not only at the 1938 Moscow trial but also in pre-trial interrogations and statements that we now have and were never intended for publication. Yet we know now that Bukharin knew that Nikolai Ezhov, the Commissar of Internal Affairs, was a member of the bloc of conspirators, yet Bukharin said nothing about it. We discuss this issue later in the present book.

Therefore Gol’tsman too may have told a story that was partly true – a real meeting with Trotsky in Copenhagen – but partly false – that Sedov met him there. That would account for the following facts:

- \* Gol’tsman’s error in confusing the name of the hotel with that of the Konditori “Bristol” – a mistake that, as Holmström has convincingly shown, could never have been invented by anybody, but could only have been made by someone who had actually been there briefly, as Gol’tsman claimed he had been.

The NKVD file on Gol’tsman has recently been declassified. Thanks to my Moscow-based colleague Vladimir Bobrov I have obtained a copy. It fully confirms Holmström’s conclusions here. We will discuss it, and reproduce the relevant texts, in the third volume of this study.

- \* Trotsky’s lying – twice – about the “Hotel Bristol” matter in a way that could have caused him serious embarrassment if anyone had done the slightest checkup on his story.

- \* The fact that Sedov and Trotsky concentrated all their effort on trying to establish that Sedov could not possibly have been in Copenhagen during this period of time.

This was a “red herring.” The essence of the matter was, of course, not yet another meeting between Gol’tsman and Sedov, but a meeting between Gol’tsman and Trotsky. At the Dewey Commission hearings Trotsky was successful in keeping the focus on the question of whether Gol’tsman had met with Sedov. The

real issue – whether Gol'tsman had met with Trotsky and received terrorist instructions, as Gol'tsman claimed at the 1936 Moscow Trial, was barely mentioned.

\* Sedov's claim that he had met with Gol'tsman only once – a story that he changed at the last minute, when he had no "cover story" ready about what was discussed at all the meetings after the first one.

Why would Sedov have not just freely admitted that Gol'tsman was correct when he referred to "six or eight" meetings? The only plausible reason would be an attempt to hide something – an attempt nearly botched by, it seems, indecision and lack of planning.

The obvious purpose of Gol'tsman's visit to Trotsky in Copenhagen would have been to hear Trotsky's instructions for terror from Trotsky's own lips. At the 1936 Moscow trial Smirnov and Mrachkovsky both said that Sedov was not an authority for them, but Trotsky was.

VYSHINSKY: Did Smirnov speak about Trotsky?

MRACHKOVSKY: Yes, he spoke about Trotsky, since Sedov was no authority either for him or for us.

VYSHINSKY: Accused Smirnov, is it true that Sedov was not an authority for you?

SMIRNOV: No, Sedov was not an authority for me. (1936 Trial 80)

Smirnov then testified that he had accepted Gaven's message because it had come directly from Trotsky rather than from Sedov. Likewise Gol'tsman would have wanted, or have been instructed, to get the terrorist instructions not just from Sedov but from Trotsky himself. Gol'tsman's testimony was that Trotsky told him orally to convey to Smirnov that "it was 'necessary to remove Stalin.'" (1936 Trial 100)

## Reich-Johannson

Trotsky does not comment on Reich-Johansson, who figures significantly in Bessonov's testimony. On pp. 45-47 of the transcript of the Third Moscow Trial Bessonov relates the story of a Soviet citizen, an engineer named Reich who worked for the Berlin Trade Representation and had been a Trotskyist since 1923 (45). Bessonov claimed that Reich became a Danish citizen in order to make it easier for him to go from one European country to another without attracting attention, and was afterwards known as Johannson [*sic*]

VYSHINSKY: What sort of a naturalization was it if he had never been to Denmark?

BESSONOV: The passport was an official one, a real one.

VYSHINSKY: But actually?

BESSONOV: Actually there was a double citizenship. At the end of 1931, or the beginning of 1932, Reich, while a Soviet citizen and a member of the staff of the Trade Representation, thanks to the assistance of the Trotskyites and money, became a Danish citizen. In the spring of 1932 he was commissioned to go to Moscow, but he did not return to Moscow and became a deserter. And from that time I knew him as Johannson, who served as liaison man between me and Trotsky.

VYSHINSKY: Reich became a Dane and a deserter. He was a double.

BESSONOV: For some period of time he had two citizenships, of which one Soviet citizenship was open, and the Danish citizenship was secret.

VYSHINSKY: Which citizenship was open?

BESSONOV: The Soviet citizenship, but the Danish citizenship was secret.

VYSHINSKY: Did this Reich play an important role as a liaison man in Trotskyite affairs?

BESSONOV: Undoubtedly, he played an important role. I know that Reich carried out commissions for Trotsky in a number of other countries. I want to speak only about what I know.

(1938 Trial 47)

The activities of Reich-Johannson are mentioned frequently in other passages of testimony by Bessonov. (48; 62; 63; 65). He is also mentioned by Krestinsky:

KRESTINSKY: No, that was an entirely different person.

Reich-Johannson was Bessonov's man, with whom he maintained connections. (1938 Trial 265)

KRESTINSKY: ...Bessonov conveyed this letter to Trotsky, who at that time was still in Norway. My impression then was that Bessonov did it by sending for Sedov, but as it turns out he sent the letter through

Reich-Johannson, and a reply was received to this letter. Trotsky replied that he agreed. (1938 Trial 282)

This strange story sounds false on its face. But in 1985 Pierre Broué made a discovery that led him to conclude that it was most likely true.

Le compte rendu du procès Boukharine mentionne deux autres «trotskystes» dans les services de Berlin, Birkengof et Reich. Nous ne savons rien d'autre du premier. L'accusé-témoin de l'accusation, Bessonov, assure que Reich, ingénieur métallurgiste, organisateur des «voyages» en U.R.S.S. refusa de revenir en U.R.S.S. à son rappel en 1932 et devint citoyen danois, avec un passeport au nom de «Johanson.» Les trotskystes ont nié à l'époque cette affirmation, mais il y a à cette époque, à Copenhague, un abonné du *Biulleten* qui s'appelle Reich et Jo Jacobsen, qui utilise en 1933 la boîte à lettres d'un autre Reich célèbre, Wilhelm, le père de la «sexpol». On note aussi la présence, mais beaucoup plus tôt, au début des années 20, d'un Ilya Reich dans la délégation commerciale soviétique.<sup>6</sup>

Translated:

The Report of Court Proceedings of the Bukharin trial mentions two other "Trotskyists"...in the service of Berlin, Birkengof and Reich. We know nothing else about the first. The accused witness, Bessonov, asserted that Reich, a metallurgical engineer and organizer of "trips" to the USSR, refused to return to the USSR when he was recalled in 1932 and became a Danish citizen with a passport in the name of "Johanson." The Trotskyists denied this statement at the time but there was, at that time, in Copenhagen, a subscriber to the *Biulleten'* named Reich and Jo Jacobsen, who in 1933 was using the postal box of another famous Reich, Wilhelm, the father of "sexpol." We also note the presence, though much earlier, at the beginning of the 1920s, of an Ilya Reich in the Soviet trade delegation.

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<sup>6</sup> Broué, "Compléments à un article sur les trotskystes en U.R.S.S.," *CahLT* 1985 (24), 65-66.



Broué repeated this discovery in an article published in English in 1990.

Victor Serge, who was personally acquainted with all the defendants in the second trial, wrote to Sedov that he thought it necessary to discover real “discussions” and real “grouplets” as the only way to throw some light on what he thought to be more “provocation” than “lies.” One example will be enough to demonstrate the necessity of such an investigation: Procurator Vyshinskii mentioned in the third trial as a “Trotskiite agent” a Russian engineer named Reich, who later became, according to him, a Danish citizen under the name of Johanson. Trotskii and his friends denied any knowledge of a Dane, formerly named Reich and now called Johanson. However, we can find in the list of subscriptions to *Biulleten Oppositsii* in Denmark the name of Reich, also called Jacobsen. We must admit that a bit of truth was hidden behind the false charge. (POS 108)

Trotsky fails to comment on the story about Reich-Johannson/Jacobsen at all, though it occupies two pages in Bessonov’s testimony. Anyone who might be reading the trial transcript with care might well have noted this curious omission. After all, if no such person existed, why would Trotsky miss the chance of exposing yet another “amalgam” of Stalin’s?

Thanks to Broué’s research we know that such a person did exist. It is expecting too much of coincidence to think that Bessonov was lying about a Copenhagen “Reich-Johannson” and yet, by coincidence, a different person known as “Reich-Jacobsen,” who lived in Copenhagen, read Russian, and subscribed to Trotsky’s Russian journal, did exist.

Perhaps Trotsky did not wish to draw attention to this person. Broué states that Reich-Johannson had a subscription to Trotsky’s *Bulletin*, which was published in Russian. There could not have

been many Danes who did, and so Trotsky had to assume he might be known to the Danish police. Even a denial by Trotsky might lead the police to investigate Reich-Jacobsen (or Reich-Johanssen) and imperil his usefulness to Trotsky.<sup>7</sup>

## Iakov Bliumkin

In 1929 Iakov Bliumkin was tried and convicted in the USSR for being a spy for Trotsky, who by this time was in exile in Turkey. Bliumkin had been Trotsky's adjutant when the latter was People's Commissar for the Army and Navy. Bliumkin had edited Trotsky's book *How The Revolution Armed Itself* (1923). Bliumkin then became an agent in the foreign division of the OGPU under Feliks Dzerzhinsky. In 1929 he was OGPU resident in Constantinople.

In 1929 Bliumkin contacted Trotsky. Evidence now available suggests that he worked for Trotsky there. The OGPU discovered this and, upon his return to the USSR, Bliumkin was arrested, tried, and executed. Trotsky admitted that he had met with Bliumkin after the latter had met his son Leon Sedov by chance on a street in Constantinople. Trotsky told the Dewey Commission that it was Radek, in whom Bliumkin had confidence, who had informed on Bliumkin.

Trotsky wrote extensively about Bliumkin immediately after he had been executed. He interpreted Bliumkin's execution as evidence that Stalin was very much afraid of the Trotskyist movement, "which abroad, in a number of countries, was having serious success in ideological and organizational ways." (*Biulleten'* No. 9, January – March 1930)

In the same issue of his *Bulletin* Trotsky claimed that a "rumor" was current that Bliumkin had gone first to Radek but that Radek,

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<sup>7</sup> Sayers and Kahn state that Reich-Johanssen was the same person who in December 1935 under the name Gustav Stirner arranged for Piatakov's passport and clandestine flight to Norway to see Trotsky. They cite no evidence for this statement. See Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn, *The Great Conspiracy: The Secret War Against Soviet Russia*. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1946, p. 279, note.1.

as a “capitulator,” had insisted that Blumkin turn himself in to the OGPU. Thanks to discoveries in the Harvard Trotsky Archive, we now know that Radek had not, in fact, genuinely “capitulated” to Stalin at all. Trotsky also speculated that I.N. Smirnov and Preobrazhensky might have played some role in Blumkin’s demise. We know now too that Smirnov was the head of the Trotskyist underground in the USSR and that Preobrazhensky was a part of it as well. Trotsky’s naming of Radek, Smirnov, and Preobrazhensky was therefore a “cover,” an attack intended to disguise the fact that they were really part of the Trotskyist movement.

According to Soviet Prosecutor Vyshinsky, Radek, in interrogations before the Second Moscow Trial of January 1937, had testified that he, Radek, was helping Blumkin distribute smuggled Trotskyist literature within the USSR:

In 1929, according to Radek, “he, Trotsky, having persuaded the Trotskyite Blumkin to organize the smuggling of literature into the U.S.S.R., sent his son Sedov to Radek’s hotel with the instruction to organize raids on Soviet Trade Representations abroad for the purpose of obtaining money which Trotsky needed for his anti-Soviet activities.” (1937 Trial 485-486)

Perhaps in revenge for Radek’s testimony and final denunciation of him Trotsky began to claim that it was Radek who had denounced Blumkin.

TROTSKY: Blumkin, a member of the Bolshevik Party and a former member of my military secretariat, was in Constantinople on an official mission.

GOLDMAN: When?

TROTSKY: In Constantinople, he visited me and also met my son in the street.

GOLDMAN: In Constantinople?

TROTSKY: In Constantinople. He took him to his room, to his hotel. My son saw Blumkin.

Blumkin said: "I will see the old man." My son came to me and said: "He will see you." I said,

"Absolutely impossible. It is too risky." He insisted so that I had to accept, but very secretly. He went to Russia, to Moscow. Radek came from Siberia as a capitulator. He had absolute confidence in Radek – an old confidence.

GOLDMAN: You mean Blumkin had?

TROTSKY: Yes, Blumkin. He was younger than Radek. He visited him, and Radek denounced Blumkin immediately to the GPU.

GOLDMAN: Blumkin visited Radek, and, according to your information, what did Blumkin say to Radek?

TROTSKY: He informed him about his visit to me, on his own initiative. Because, if he had asked me about telling of this visit, it would have been absolutely impossible for him to do such a stupid thing.

GOLDMAN: What did Radek do after Blumkin informed him of his visit to you?

TROTSKY: He denounced him for his visit to me.

GOLDMAN: What happened to Blumkin?

TROTSKY: He was shot. (CLT 105-106)

Pierre Broué discovered that all of Trotsky's stories about Blumkin were lies, probably intended to cover up Blumkin's close collaboration with Trotsky.

La version donnée en 1930 de l'affaire Blumkine par Trotsky et Sedov était une version défensive, en réalité destinée à limiter les dégâts après cette arrestation catastrophique <sup>8</sup>. Les mencheviks avaient probablement raison sur le fond quand ils assuraient alors que Blumkine travaillait pour Trotsky, effectuant les liaisons les plus importantes, et que la visite de l'été ou de l'automne 1929 n'était pas un hasard résultant d'une rencontre fortuite avec Sedov dans la rue à Istanbul. Blumkine rendit effectivement visite à Trotsky, probablement en août, ce qui nous a été confirmé par plusieurs de ses visiteurs qui l'ont rencontré et à qui fut donnée la version du hasard <sup>9</sup>. Mais Sedov a fait savoir le contraire à la postérité en précisant de sa main sur le document en question que c'était Blumkine qui avait rédigé, le 2 avril, à sa demande et celle de Trotsky, une notice nécrologique sur Dreitser qui avait été son compagnon d'armes, mais qu'eux ne connaissaient pas<sup>10</sup>. (Broué Compléments 64.)

Translated:

The story given out in 1930 about the Blumkin affair by Trotsky and Sedov was a defensive story, in reality aimed at limiting the damage after this catastrophic arrest. The Mensheviks were probably basically correct when they asserted at that time that Blumkin was working for Trotsky, maintaining the most important contacts and that his visit in the summer or fall of 1929 was not an accident resulting from a chance meeting with Sedov on a street in Istanbul. In reality Blumkin was visiting Trotsky, probably in August. This has been confirmed to us by several of his visitors who met him (Blumkin) and were told the story of the chance meeting. But Sedov informed posterity of the opposite when he put in his own

handwriting on the document in question that it had been Blumkin who had edited, on April 2, at his request and that of Trotsky, an obituary notice on Dreitser who had been his companion-in-arms but whom they [Sedov and Trotsky] did not know.

This account of Broué's is sufficient to show that Trotsky was lying again. Curiously, Broué's account has its own inaccuracies as well. At the Dewey Commission hearings Trotsky admitted that he did know Dreitser (spelled "Dreitzer" in the hearings volume.) Dreitser was later a defendant in the First Moscow Trial of August 1936.

GOLDMAN:... Do you know E.A. Dreitzer, Mr. Trotsky?

TROTSKY: Yes, he was of the younger generation. Dreitzer was an officer of the Red Army. During and after my expulsion from the Party he had, together with ten or twelve officers, organized a guard around my home. He was among them. (CLT 89)

Blumkin's confession to the OGPU was published in 2002.<sup>8</sup> In it he stated that he met Trotsky only once, on April 16, 1929, in Turkey. According to Broué here, Sedov stated that he was already working with Blumkin on April 2, 1929. So Blumkin lied in his confession.

According to the annotations by Oleg Mozokhin, the FSB<sup>9</sup> researcher who edited and published Blumkin's confession, Blumkin told a number of other lies in his confession. This probably had something to do with the decision to execute him. In 1918, when he had been a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, Blumkin had murdered the German ambassador Count Mirbach, in an attempt to sabotage the Bolsheviks' attempt to make a separate peace with Germany. Blumkin had been

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<sup>8</sup> "Isproved' terrorista." *Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv* No. 6 (2002), 25-59.

<sup>9</sup> "Federal'naia Sluzhba Besopasnosti" – Federal Security Service, the continuer of the KGB, MGB, NKGB, and ultimately of the security divisions of the NKVD.

amnestied, evidently on condition that he work as a foreign agent. No doubt it was understood that he refrain in future from any other attempts to undermine Soviet policy. That alone might well have been enough to account for his execution.

But Bliumkin did state that Radek, along with Smilga, tried to draw him (Bliumkin) "into some new fractional work." Since both Radek and Smilga were Trotskyists, this could only have been Trotskyist work. So Trotsky's claim that it was Radek who denounced Bliumkin to the OGPU is another lie.

Moreover, how could Trotsky possibly know who, if anyone, had denounced Bliumkin? If the Dewey Commission members had really been what they claimed to be, objective investigators carrying out an honest investigation to see whether Trotsky were guilty or not, they would have at least asked him this question. We discuss the Dewey Commission and its problems in another chapter of the present work.

## The Slogan "Remove Stalin"

According to testimony at the First Moscow Trial and the 1937 statements of Valentin Astrov the oppositionists in the bloc used the slogan "remove Stalin" as a euphemism meaning "assassinate Stalin." Evidence in two Trotsky Archives, as cited by Broué, shows that Trotsky and Sedov were discussing the relative merits of employing this slogan in the second half of 1932, at exactly the same time as the bloc of oppositionists was being formed inside the Soviet Union and its members were discussing the same slogan in the sense of "assassination."

During the Second Moscow Trial of January 1937 Radek described the contents of this letter of Trotsky's as follows:

Trotsky wrote that the information he possessed led him to conclude that I had become convinced that he was right, and that without the realization of the Trotskyite demands the policy would find itself at an

impasse. Trotsky further wrote that since he knew me to be an active person he was convinced that I would return to the struggle.... At the end of the letter Trotsky wrote approximately as follows: "You must bear in mind the experience of the preceding period and realize that for you there can be no returning to the past, that the struggle has entered a new phase and that the new feature in this phase is that either **we shall be destroyed together with the Soviet Union, or we must raise the question of removing ("ustraneni") the leadership.**" The word terrorism was not used, but when I read the words "removing the leadership," it became clear to me what Trotsky had in mind. ... Trotsky informed me that **not only the Trotskyites but also the Zinovievites had decided to return to the struggle and that negotiations for union were under way.** I sent no reply, believing that the matter must be thought over very thoroughly. (1937 Trial 86-7/ Russian ed. 52)

Sedov's letter to Trotsky partially reprinted in French translation by Broué confirms Radek's words about the Zinovievites.

The [bloc] has been organized. It includes the Zinovievists, the Sten-Lominadze group, and the Trotskyists (the former "[capitulators]").

Radek testified that he had confirmed that Trotsky intended "terrorism" in a talk with Sergei Mrachkovsky that took place at the end of October or beginning of November 1932.

VYSHINSKY: What did Mrachkovsky reply?

RADEK: He replied quite definitely that the struggle had entered the terrorist phase and that in order to carry out these tactics they had now united with the Zinovievites and would set about the preparatory work.... It was clear that **since terrorism was the new position,** the



preparatory work must consist in assembling and forming terrorist cadres. (1937 Trial 88.)

According to Radek's testimony here it was only later in 1932 that Trotsky explicitly used the word "terror." This corresponds with the information from Astrov. In January 1937 Astrov testified that the Rightists formally decided to form a bloc with the Trotskyists and others at their August 26 – September 1, 1932, conference. Only at this time was terror specifically approved as a method of struggle. The fact that in 1932 the main members of the bloc were the Trotskyists and the Zinovievists is confirmed in the letter from Sedov to Trotsky that Broué and Getty found in the Harvard Trotsky archive.

Radek:

When the question arose against whom terrorism should be directed, it concerned terrorism directed against the leading core of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U, and the Soviet government. And although not a single name was mentioned during this conversation, I ... did not have the slightest doubt that the acts were to be directed against Stalin and his immediate colleagues, against Kirov, Molotov, Voroshilov and Kaganovich. (1937 Trial 80)

As a result, Radek testified, a plot to assassinate Sergei Kirov, Party leader in Leningrad, was hatched in April 1933. Kirov was actually killed in December 1934 by Leonid Nikolaev, a member of a clandestine terrorist Zinovievist opposition group in Leningrad.<sup>10</sup>

Getty surmised that the letter Radek said he had received from Trotsky in February or March 1932 while he, Radek, was in

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<sup>10</sup> Though the fact is denied by Alla Kirilina, Matthew Lenoe, and Åsmund Egge, the three most recent students of the Kirov murder who work within the "anti-Stalin paradigm," there is overwhelming evidence that Nikolaev was indeed a member of a clandestine Zinovievist group in Leningrad. For a detailed discussion see Furr, Kirov.

Geneva, “involved an attempt to persuade the addressee[s] to return to opposition.” Radek confirmed that Trotsky’s letter did contain such an appeal but that it closed by saying, “We must raise the question of removing the leadership.”

The terms for “remove” (*ustranit’*, *ubrat’*, *ustranenie*) are used several times by the defendants in the Moscow Trials.

Mrachkovsky goes on to say that already in 1931 this Trotskyite group openly discussed the question of terrorism.

I. N. Smirnov, who had visited Berlin, brought back instructions from Trotsky, which he received through Trotsky’s son, L. Sedov, to the following effect: “Until we put Stalin out of the way (“uberem”), we shall not be able to come back to power.”

VYSHINSKY: What do you mean by the expression: “Until we put Stalin out of the way (“uberem”)”?

**MRACHKOVSKY: Until we kill (“ub’iem”) Stalin.** At that very meeting, in the presence of Smirnov, myself, Ter-Vaganyan and Safonova, I was given the task of organizing a terrorist group, that is to say, to select reliable people. (1936 Trial p. 41; Russian original: *Pravda*, August 20, 1936, 4)

We have quoted Piatakov’s and Radek’s comments on the question of “removing” Stalin in a previous chapter and will not repeat them here.

At the 1936 trial Gol’tsman confessed to bringing “Trotsky’s personal instructions to organize terrorist acts” back to the bloc. (1936 Trial 40) Gol’tsman testified that Trotsky had used the term “remove Stalin,” saying this could only be done by terrorism (i.e. violence). A turn to “terror,” together with the discussions necessary to justify it in Marxist terms, at the present conjuncture, etc., and perhaps arrangements for Gol’tsman to hear it from

Trotsky directly, might well have occupied those several mysterious meetings with Sedov.

## The Slogan “Remove Stalin” in the Trotsky Archive

At the January 1937 trial Karl Radek testified that, in his letter of the spring of 1932, Trotsky had said that once “union” with the Zinovievists had been achieved “the question of removing the leadership” would have to be raised. This term – “remove Stalin” – can be partially traced in both the Trotsky-Sedov correspondence of late 1932 and in Astrov’s confession and confrontation with Bukharin of January 1937.

We say “partially traced” because, in reality, only excerpts – called “vyderzhki” or “vypiski” at the top of each document – from the correspondence on this subject remains in the Trotsky-Sedov correspondence in the Harvard Trotsky Archive. Evidently these excerpts – all have been retyped in a uniform manner – were prepared by a secretary, probably Jean van Heijenoort, for possible use at the Dewey Commission hearings in Paris, which took place later than those in Mexico.

The full texts of these letters is not in the Archive. They have been removed at some time. This is further evidence of what Getty called the “purge” of the Trotsky Archive, involving incriminating materials.

Broué outlines the discussion between Trotsky and Sedov concerning the use of this slogan in several of his published works. In the documents we have, Sedov appears to have been the more ardent partisan of the slogan “remove Stalin.” Trotsky agreed with the concept but in October 1932 told Sedov that they should not adopt it as yet, in order not to alienate other potential allies.<sup>11</sup> Broué concedes that “we do not know which one convinced the

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<sup>11</sup> Broué, *Trotsky et le bloc 20-22*; Broué, “Liova le ‘fiston’” 15.

other” (Léon Sedov 81). Writing in Russian Rogovin puts quotation marks around the phrase: “*ubrat’ Stalina*.”<sup>12</sup>

Trotsky also says that the “allies” and the “Rightists” support the slogan “remove Stalin.” (Broué 20) This corresponds exactly to Astrof’s assertions:

...положение не изменится до тех пор, пока СТАЛИН «не будет убран из ЦК»

Translated:

... “the situation will not change until Stalin is removed (*ubran*) from the CC” [Bukharin in 1928]

Лозунг — «убрать СТАЛИНА» уже на этой стадии деятельности организации всячески культивировался в целом ряде встреч и бесед...

Translated:

The slogan “remove (*ubrat’*) Stalin” was already cultivated in every way at this stage of the organization’s activity in a whole series of meetings and conversations... [from 1928 on]

Он подверг резким нападкам СТАЛИНА, который «губит страну и должен быть во что бы то ни стало убран.»

Translated:

He [Bukharin in 1928] subjected Stalin to harsh attacks, saying that he “is leading the country to ruin and must be removed (*ubran*) at any cost.”

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<sup>12</sup> Rogovin, 1937. Ch. 44.

МАТВЕЕВ заметил, что главная задача — это убрать СТАЛИНА любыми средствами, в том числе и террором.

Translated:

[In 1931] Matveev remarked that the main task is to remove (*ubrat'*) Stalin by any means, including by terror.

Остановившись на крупнейшей роли СТАЛИНА, БУХАРИН сказал, что СТАЛИНА как главную силу в этом руководстве необходимо будет во что бы то ни стало устранить.

Translated:

[In 1930] Speaking about Stalin's role, one of the greatest importance, Bukharin said that it was essential to get rid of (*ustranit'*) Stalin at any cost, as he was the main force in this leadership.

(Lubianka 1937-1938 23, 24, 30, 27)

Astrov repeated this in his confrontation with Bukharin two days later:

ЕЖОВ. В своих показаниях вы говорите относительно того, что впервые вопрос о смене партийного руководства в резкой форме, в форме убрать Сталина возник на совещании в 1928 году на даче в Зубалове, где присутствовали Бухарин, Сlepков и вы. Подтверждаете вы эти показания?

АСТРОВ. Да.... Затем Бухарин сказал, что положение не изменится, если Сталин не будет убран.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> ""...Ni razu ne govorilos' otnositel'no terrora.' Stenogramma ochnoi stavki N.I.

Translated:

EZHOV: In your confessions you say that the question of replacing the Party leadership in its sharpest form, in the form “remove (*ubrat*) Stalin,” arose for the first time at a meeting in 1928 in the dacha in Zubalovo, where Bukharin, Slepkov, and you were present. Do you confirm this?

ASTROV: Yes.... Then Bukharin said that the situation will not change if Stalin is not removed (*ubran*)..

Astrov did say that in 1928 “most Rightists” did not understand the word “remove” as meaning “kill.”

ЕЖОВ. Что тогда имелось в виду под термином убрать?\*

АСТРОВ. На этом этапе, во всяком случае, как я понимал, и думаю, что большинство правых так понимали, террористический акт под этим не подразумевался. (90)

Translated:

EZHOV: What was meant at that time by the term “remove” (*ubrat*)?

ASTROV: At this state, at any rate as I understood it, I think that the majority of the Rights understood it not as an act of terrorism.

Бухарин сказал, что Сталин своим руководством губит страну и поэтому должен быть устранен.

ЕЖОВ. Подразумевалось ли тогда более конкретно, что нужно сделать?

АСТРОВ. Нет еще. (91)

Translated:

Bukharin said that Stalin, by his leadership, is ruining the country and therefore must be gotten rid of (*ustranen*).

EZHOV: Was this understood at that time more concretely, as to what should be done?

ASTROV: Not yet.

This too corresponds with the excerpts from the Trotsky Archive. It does seem that, at first, Trotsky may not have wished the slogan "remove Stalin" to mean assassination. Of course, Trotsky may well have been lying on this point, as he did on so many others. Also, we have only "excerpts" from the Trotsky-Sedov correspondence concerning the slogan "Remove Stalin." It is always possible that the aim of assassination was contained in other correspondence. The full correspondence, and even the full texts of the letters excerpted, is no longer in the Trotsky Archive. These items were among the materials "purged."

In a report published in the book *Politbiuro i Lev Trotskii. Tom 2*, NKVD chief Iagoda stated that a letter from Trotsky seized in the USSR revealed the "unexpected" discovery that in 1931 Trotsky did not endorse the slogan "Remove Stalin." This corresponds with the materials in the Trotsky archive identified by Broué and also with Astrov's testimony that "terror" was not decided on until 1932. (PiLT 2, 37) Its existence is good evidence that in 1931 the GPU was looking for the truth, not trying to "frame" Trotsky. We will discuss this valuable collection of materials in volume two.

Astrov said that Bukharin repeated this to him privately when they were together on a hunting trip in 1931 or 1932:

Я помню, что мы говорили о роли Сталина в партии.  
Бухарин сказал, что с точки зрения правых необходимо  
убрать Сталина. (92)

Translated:

I recall that we were talking about Stalin's role in the Party. Bukharin said that from the point of view of the Rightists it was essential to remove (*ubrat'*) Stalin.

Bukharin at a meeting of his supporters in 1930 or 1931:

Бухарин сказал, что Сталина, как главную руководящую силу в партийном руководстве, в процессе этой борьбы придется устранить. (94)

Translated:

Bukharin said that Stalin, as the main leading force in the Party leadership, must be gotten rid of (*ustranit'*) in the process of this struggle.

There are a number of striking correspondences between documents in the Harvard Trotsky Archive, on the one hand, and Astrof's and Radek's testimony on the other. The chief difference we wish to consider now is the question of assassination – in Russian, "individual terror" or just "terror."

Both Radek and Astrof claim that Trotsky (Radek) and the Trotskyists, like the Rights with whom they were in a bloc (Astrof), supported "terror." In their public statements Trotsky and Sedov strongly and consistently denied the accusation that they advocated terror and argued that it was inconsistent with Marxism. There is no indication in the Trotsky Archive documents that Trotsky or Sedov urged their followers or the bloc generally to kill Stalin or others.

Broué regards this as definitive. But why? Getty discovered that the Trotsky Archive at Harvard has been purged. As we argue in the present essay, it is most likely that the materials removed were considered incriminating by those who removed them. Trotsky's and Sedov's lies and falsifications, which we also discuss elsewhere in the present essay, suggest that they were anxious to keep some of their actions hidden. If they were advocating that Stalin and other Soviet leaders associated with him be murdered it



is logical that Trotsky and Sedov would have wanted to deny this fact publicly in order to keep it secret.

In the next chapter we examine Broué's attempt at what can only be called a cover-up, an attempt to conceal from his readers Getty's important discoveries. The obvious motive for this cover-up is to leave unchallenged the notion that the bloc ended shortly after it had begun and consequently that Trotsky could not have instructed his followers to resort to "terror" against the Stalin leadership, as alleged in the Moscow Trials.

# Chapter 6. Non-Soviet Evidence – The Trotsky Archive Purged

## Pierre Broué's cover-up

When he wrote his biography of Trotsky Broué knew and cited Getty's research on the Harvard Trotsky Archive.<sup>1</sup> He refers to it as follows:

On pourrait faire les mêmes remarques à propos du bloc des oppositions de 1932 que d'autres chercheurs ont aperçu sans le reconnaître, faute d'un outil chronologique suffisant ou du fait de préjugés solides et d'idées préconçues. Comment expliquer la difficulté à donner à cette découverte la publicité qu'elle méritait ? Le premier écho à l'article de 1980 où je mentionnais le bloc et reproduisais les documents qui l'attestent<sup>20</sup> est de l'Américain Arch J. Getty et date de 1985.<sup>21</sup>

Translation:

One could make similar remarks concerning the bloc of oppositions of 1932, which other researchers have noticed without recognizing it for lack of a suitable chronology or because of firm prejudices and preconceived ideas. How else to explain the difficulty of giving this discovery the publicity that it deserves? The first echo of the 1980 article in which I mentioned the bloc and reproduced the documents that attest to it<sup>20</sup> is by the American Arch J. Getty [sic] and dates from 1985.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Broué. *Trotsky*. Paris: Fayard, 1988. Online edition at <https://www.marxists.org/francais/broue/works/1988/00/index.htm> This citation at [https://www.marxists.org/francais/broue/works/1988/00/PB\\_tky\\_48.htm](https://www.marxists.org/francais/broue/works/1988/00/PB_tky_48.htm), note 21. (Broué Trotsky)

Broué's note 20 is to his own 1980 article. His note 21 that follows only a few words later reads:

"J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purge. The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered*. Cambridge, Ma., 1985, pp. 119 & 245, n. 24."

Getty's note 24 again cites Broué's 1980 article.

But Broué does *not* cite Getty's note 20, the one that documents the purging of letters from Trotsky's archive. In his book at note 20 Getty's statement is definite, conclusive – the archive *has* indeed been purged.<sup>2</sup> Broué also ignores the second of the striking discoveries in Getty's article: the certified mail receipts that prove Trotsky was in touch with at least Radek, Sokol'nikov, and Preobrazhenskii. Broué does not *challenge* Getty's conclusion that the archives opened in 1980 had been purged. Instead he *ignores* it, together with the certified mail receipts which are the evidence for it.

It is obvious that Broué "covered up" – deliberate concealed – from his readers the fact that the archive was purged and the evidence that proves it. The purging of the archive is as significant a discovery as was the proof that a bloc had really existed.

Why did Broué cover up such an important discovery? Perhaps because the fact that the archive was purged would invalidate Broué's central conclusion: that the bloc was "ephemeral," that it had collapsed almost immediately, that it had led to nothing. It would also leave open the possibility that Trotsky had indeed plotted "terror" against Stalin and other Soviet leaders and had collaborated with Germany and Japan.

Only if the archive had *not* been purged could Broué submit the lack of further references to the bloc as evidence that the bloc did

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter Four above for the text of Getty's notes.

indeed collapse. Getty's discovery that the archive had been purged removes the basis for Broué's notion that the bloc had ceased to function soon after it had been formed.

This, therefore, is the likely reason for Broué's cover-up. The pretense that the archive had not been purged was necessary for Broué to preserve his belief that the charges in the first and subsequent Moscow trials were fabrications. For Broué to admit that the archive had been purged would entail the corollary that the bloc might well have continued but that evidence of its continuation had been among the purged materials.

If the bloc had continued, the possibility would exist that it could have had terrorist aims. If Trotsky's archive was purged, the possibility would exist that Trotsky had been in contact with his Soviet followers after 1932 and been advocating "terror," as the Trotskyists in the Moscow trials confessed. The dominant Trotskyist-anticommunist paradigm of Stalin would be seriously crippled.

## Vadim Rogovin's account

In his own discussion of the bloc Vadim Rogovin cites Broué's work. Like Broué Rogovin ignores Getty's discoveries of Trotsky's missing letters to Radek, Sokol'nikov and others and of the purging of the archive. Rogovin does not explicitly take up the question of whether the bloc lasted after 1932. But he does refer to the bloc as "the 1932 bloc," thus tacitly accepting Broué's contention that the bloc did not survive.

In a lecture he delivered in May 1996 Rogovin stated:

Although many members of these opposition tendencies were arrested at the end of 1932 and in early 1933, not a single one of them gave information about the formation of this single united anti-Stalinist bloc. Only in 1935 and 1936, when a new wave of arrests followed the murder of Kirov in December of 1934 and **many people were subjected to the worst tortures**, did the secret police, the

GPU, find out about the existence of the united bloc from 1932. This was one of the main factors which drove Stalin to unleash the Great Terror.<sup>3</sup>

In his book *1937* published in Moscow the same year (1996) Rogovin elaborated this same point:

Антисталинский блок окончательно сложился в июне 1932 года. Спустя несколько месяцев Гольцман передал Седову информацию о блоке, а затем привёз в Москву ответ Троцкого о согласии сотрудничать с блоком.

В отношениях Троцкого и Седова с их единомышленниками в СССР была отлично отлажена конспирация. Хотя ГПУ вело тщательную слежку за ними, оно не смогло обнаружить никаких встреч, переписки и иных форм их связи с советскими оппозиционерами. Далеко не все оппозиционные контакты были прослежены и внутри Советского Союза. Хотя в конце 1932 - начале 1933 года была осуществлена серия арестов участников нелегальных оппозиционных групп, ни один из арестованных не упомянул о переговорах по поводу создания блока. Поэтому некоторые участники этих переговоров (Ломинадзе, Шацкий, Гольцман и др.) до 1935-1936 годов оставались на свободе. Лишь после новой волны арестов, развернувшихся вслед за убийством Кирова, после допросов и передопросов десятков оппозиционеров Сталин получил информацию о блоке 1932 года, послужившую одним из главных импульсов для организации великой чистки.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rogovin, "Stalin's Great Terror: Origins and Consequences." University of Melbourne, May 28 1996. At <http://www.wsos.org/exhibits/1937/lecture1.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Rogovin, *1937*. Ch. 9. At <http://trst.narod.ru/rogovin/t4/ix.htm>

The anti-Stalinist bloc finally took form in June 1932. After a few months, Goltsman passed information to Sedov about the bloc, and then brought back to Moscow Trotsky's reply about agreeing to collaborate with the bloc.

In relations between Trotsky and Sedov and their cothinkers in the USSR, the conspiracy was outstandingly maintained. Although the GPU conducted careful surveillance of them, it was unable to uncover any meetings, correspondence or other forms of their contact with Soviet oppositionists. And far from all of the opposition contacts inside the Soviet Union were tracked down. Although there was a series of arrests of participants in illegal opposition groups at the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933, not a single one of those arrested mentioned negotiations about the creation of a bloc. For this reason several of / 64/ the participants in these negotiations (Lominadze, Shatskin, Goltsman and others) remained at liberty until 1935-36. Only after a new wave of arrests following Kirov's assassination, after interrogations and reinterrogations of dozens of Oppositionists, did Stalin receive information about the 1932 bloc, which served as one of the main reasons for organizing the Great Purge.<sup>5</sup>

In his 1996 lecture Rogovin alleges that the arrestees who did confess about the bloc's existence were tortured into doing so. Neither Rogovin nor anyone else has ever had any evidence that these prisoners were tortured at all, much less "subjected to the worst tortures." And Rogovin later dropped this claim.

This is not only a lie. It is a "tell" – a sign that Rogovin was dishonest, not above fabricating falsehoods when he needed to do so. But why did he feel that he needed to do so in this case?

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<sup>5</sup> Rogovin, 1937. Ch. 9. At <http://trst.narod.ru/rogovin/t4/ix.htm> (Rogovin 1937); Rogovin. 1937. Stalin's Year of Terror. Translated by Frederick Choate. Oak Park, MI: Mehring Books, 1998, 63-64.

Perhaps because the defendants in the Moscow Trial confessed to something truthful, something Rogovin could not deny: the existence of the bloc. To preserve his belief that the *rest* of the defendants' confessions were false Rogovin felt impelled to posit that they had been tortured.

But let us consider the logic of this specific falsehood of Rogovin's. It is particularly revealing. Rogovin falsely assumed that the NKVD had tortured the prisoners – *and then the prisoners had told the truth!* In fact we have no evidence that the prisoners were tortured. But even if they had been tortured, they revealed something truthful – the existence of the bloc. That would logically suggest that (a) the NKVD was attempting *not* to fabricate false stories, but to discover the truth; and therefore (b) other parts of the confessions made by these prisoners, including Moscow Trial defendants, were also true.

Perhaps Rogovin belatedly realized the logic of his lie about torture. That would explain why he omitted the claim about torture in the account in his book, where he only mentions “interrogations and reinterrogations.” His lie about torture contradicted his central thesis that the defendants had lied about Trotsky's conspiracy.

In reality Rogovin had no evidence whatever that the defendants had been tortured. Nor did he have any evidence that the rest of what they confessed – Trotsky's involvement in conspiracies to murder Kirov and other Soviet leaders – was false. Like Broué, Rogovin seems to have thought it unacceptable to admit the possibility that Trotsky had been plotting these murders, and therefore that the testimony to that effect by the Moscow Trial defendants was true. This must have been a very important value to these two Trotskyite researchers for them to have recourse to such blatant falsifications and illogicalities.

Despite some minor differences Rogovin's overall analysis is the same as Broué's. Both claim the Moscow Trials were an “amalgam”: not pure fiction, but 90% falsehoods combined with

10% truth. Neither has any evidence – none whatever – to support the “90% falsehood” part of their assertion. The “10% true” is taken from the title of the tenth chapter of Rogovin’s book *1937. Stalin’s Year of Terror: “Ten Percent of the Truth, or What Really Happened.”* Rogovin took it from a statement by A.N. Safonova, the former wife of I.N. Smirnov, who in 1956 told Khrushchev’s KGB and Procuracy that her confessions and those of Mrachkovskii, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Evdokimov, and Ter-Vaganian “to the degree of 90% did not reflect reality.”<sup>6</sup>

Neither Broué nor Rogovin considers the possibility, even theoretically, that Trotsky may have been lying when he claimed he did not instruct his followers to engage in “terror.” But why not? After all, both Broué and Rogovin admit that Trotsky and Sedov lied about the bloc and about Gaven. Both ignore Getty’s discovery that Trotsky lied about being in contact with Radek and others, though they certainly knew about it.

Both Broué and Rogovin excuse Trotsky’s recourse to falsehood as a necessity imposed by the need to act in a conspiratorial manner. However, if Trotsky had in fact instructed his Soviet followers to engage in “terror” and sabotage, he would certainly have denied it. After all, he denied much less serious accusations such as the formation of the “bloc” and his correspondence with Radek and others. Here as elsewhere, then, the fact that Trotsky denied advocating “terror” means nothing.

There are no rational grounds to reject out of hand the hypothesis that Trotsky may have indeed advocated “individual terror” – individual violence – against Stalin and his associates, as charged in the Moscow Trials. Trotsky was well acquainted with violence. He participated in a great deal of it during the Civil War. Trotsky used the strongest possible language against Stalin. And we have Zborowski’s reports to his NKVD handlers. We will examine them in a later chapter.

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<sup>6</sup> Safonova’s remark is quoted in *Reabilitatsiia. Politicheskie Protsessy*, p.181.



Broué's and Rogovin's refusal to consider this possibility can be explained only by their strong preconceived bias in favor of Trotsky. They both take it for granted that Trotsky would never have done this, though they have no grounds for this assumption. They could have even claimed that plotting to kill Stalin was the right thing to do, as van Heijenoort stated to his biographer Anita Burdman Feferman.

We can't be certain why Broué and Rogovin found admitting this possibility so distasteful that they were willing to lie in order to avoid it. Whatever the reason, though, Broué and Rogovin are not alone. Virtually every mainstream anticommunist historian assumes, without evidence, of any kind, that the defendants at the Moscow Trials, Trotsky and Sedov included, were innocent. Trotsky's innocence of any conspiracy to use "terror" is a constituent part of the "anti-Stalin paradigm" of Soviet history – the paradigm that Trotsky did much to inaugurate but that did not achieve widespread acceptance until Nikita Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" at the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in February 1956.

## The Purge of the Harvard Trotsky Archive

Getty discovered that the Harvard Trotsky Archive has been purged. But who did the purging?

There are only four persons who could possibly have purged the Trotsky archive. One is Trotsky himself. This can't be completely ruled out. But Jean van Heijenoort, who managed the Trotsky archive in the 1930s, prepared it for shipment to Harvard, and then oversaw the cataloguing of the entire archive, does not mention that Trotsky was involved in the archive. As far as we know he relied on his secretaries to manage his archive for him. This hypothesis also fails to explain Deutscher's and van Heijenoort's silence about what we know had remained in the archive – a matter we discuss below.

## Natalia Sedova

Trotsky's widow Natalia Sedova had access to the Harvard Trotsky Archive. In 1959 she gave Isaac Deutscher access to what was then referred to as the "closed archive." But Sedova spent no time at Harvard. She lived the last years of her life in Mexico and in Paris. Van Heijenoort testified that she did not use the archive in connection with her work with Victor Serge on a biography of her husband, of which he writes:

Long passages printed between quotation marks were written or dictated by Natalia Sedova. They contain valuable information but ... she did not have the opportunity of using the archives in order to refresh her memory. Hence these texts contain inaccuracies, in particular glaring errors of chronology. (WTIE p. 151)

In a previous article I wrote:

Trotsky's wife also had access. But at least one very personal letter of Trotsky's to his wife remains in the archives – something that his wife might be expected to have removed. (Furr, Evidence 38 at note 35)

It is unlikely that Sedova purged the archive.

## Deutscher and van Heijenoort

Both Deutscher and van Heijenoort omit any mention of the materials found by Getty and Broué, such as the existence of the bloc of oppositionists; Sedov's and Trotsky's discussion and approval of it; Trotsky's correspondence with Radek, Sokol'nikov, and others whom he denied having any contact with; etc.

Obviously the materials found in the archive in the early 1980s must have been there when van Heijenoort worked with the archive over many years and when Deutscher used it. Broué even published the letter from van Heijenoort to Sedov of July 3, 1937, in which the former reminds Sedov of the other two documents

concerning the bloc: the letter from Trotsky to Sedov and another, probably the answering letter, of Sedov to Trotsky.

One might wonder why either Deutscher or van Heijenoort would fail to mention the materials found by Getty and Broué when they knew that this failure would show them to be liars after January 1980, when the archive was scheduled to be opened. Deutscher was born in 1907. He could have reasonably expected to be alive at the age of 73 in 1980 (in fact he died in 1967, only sixty years of age).

## Isaac Deutscher

Deutscher gained access to the “closed archive” of correspondence in 1959 in time for his research on the third volume of his trilogy on Trotsky’s life *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky, 1929-1940* (pp. x, xii). Deutscher wrote that there was nothing surprising in the “closed archive.”

...there was little or nothing strictly confidential or private in the political content of that correspondence. Indeed, with much of it I had become familiar in the nineteen-thirties – I shall presently explain in what way – so that re-reading it in 1959 I found hardly anything that could startle or surprise me. (xii)

Deutscher does not mention the materials documenting Trotsky’s approval of the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites. Nor does he mention the secret letters of 1932 to Radek, Sokol’nikov, Preobrazhensky, Kollontai and Litvinov identified by Getty from their certified mail receipts.

How can we account for these striking omissions by Deutscher? There are a limited number of possible explanations. It may be that Deutscher did a quick, careless job and missed a great deal of evidence, including the material in question. In van Heijenoort’s opinion Deutscher made many errors:

I must also say that, at the beginning, Mr. Mieke used, in good faith, Isaac Deutscher's book, and this book is notoriously deficient as far as dates, places, spelling of names and so on, are concerned.<sup>7</sup>

In his memoir van Heijenoort gives almost two pages of corrections to Deutscher's account (153-155). He attempts to explain Deutscher's errors in the following way:

My impression is that Deutscher worked hurriedly in the archives, more like a reporter who grabs any information than a historian who sifts the documents. (WTIE 154)

We may also attribute Deutscher's omissions to his strong pro-Trotsky bias. His biography often lapses into hero-worship. He seldom draws upon historical sources – for example, on contemporary newspaper and magazine accounts – other than Trotsky's own writings and papers. Nor does Deutscher note contradictions in Trotsky's own writings and statements of the kind we and Holmström have pointed out.

A work of history like this in any other field would have long ago been dismissed as shoddy, incompetent, and unreliable. But in the topsy-turvy world of Soviet history, where books are too often judged according to whether they have reached acceptably anticommunist and anti-Stalin conclusions rather than on the merits of their scholarship, Deutscher's biography has always enjoyed a respect that is entirely unmerited.

Deutscher's pro-Trotsky bias could coexist easily with a rushed and slipshod approach. The work of a researcher in a hurry would be guided by the biases he already possessed. Although it may have been Deutscher who purged the Trotsky archive, it is also possible that Deutscher did not study the archive thoroughly. His

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<sup>7</sup> Van Heijenoort, J. "The History of Trotsky's Papers." *Harvard Library Bulletin* July 1980, 296. (van Heijenoort 1980) Patrick Mieke catalogued the papers for Harvard Library. (Feferman 297)

omissions may have been due to hasty and careless work rather than, or in addition to, deliberate suppression.

## Jean van Heijenoort

Van Heijenoort was Trotsky's secretary longer than anyone else. He was in charge of putting together the Trotsky archive, including the "closed archive." He too omitted any mention of Trotsky's letters to Opposition figures or the purging of this archive as noted by Getty, or the evidence of the bloc that both Broué and Getty examined.

The most detailed account of the Trotsky Archive is chapter fourteen of Feferman's 1993 book. Feferman took most of the information for her book from interviews with van Heijenoort himself. But in this chapter she also cites independent sources, so we can be sure van Heijenoort did in fact know the archive, including the "closed archive," extremely well – better than anybody else, Trotsky included. Van Heijenoort himself had written some of the materials in it. He had gone through everything many times: probably multiple times when he was Trotsky's secretary from 1932 to 1939, again when he put the TA together for shipment to Harvard in 1939 (290), again during several trips to Harvard beginning in 1940 (291). He went through it yet again "in the early 1950s" (291) "to organize it, to catalogue it, and to make its contents accessible" (292).

There was no one who knew more about the archives or their creator than he, no one who had the proximity and, at the same time, the neutrality... As for the archive itself, as in all things, he had an intense desire to be exact, to correct the mistakes others had made, and to insure that the record was as complete as possible. (292-3)

Feferman doesn't tell us what she meant by van Heijenoort's "neutrality." She rather naively depicts him as both non-political and as a far-Rightist who nevertheless retained a great deal of

regard for Trotsky. Perhaps these views appeared to Feferman to cancel each other out and leave “neutrality”? Whatever Feferman may have believed, van Heijenoort was anything but objective in his handling of the Trotsky archive.

Feferman quotes the words of Douglas Bryant, head of Harvard libraries, spoken at a memorial gathering for van Heijenoort at Harvard in April 1986. Bryant had begun his career at Harvard working on the Trotsky archive. According to Bryant,

“He [van Heijenoort] alone organized and directed the immense job of cataloguing the vast and complex archive of Leon Trotsky which Harvard had acquired in two parts.” (294)

Van Heijenoort published his memoir, *With Trotsky in Exile* (WTIE), in 1978 and his essay on the archive in the *Harvard Library Bulletin* in 1980. Thus he wrote about the archive on the threshold of its being made public, and again when it opened.

In his 1978 memoir van Heijenoort wrote of the preparation for the Dewey Commission, in the course of which he once again went through the whole of Trotsky’s archive,

Needless to say, in all this work [in searching the archives and preparing materials for the Commission hearings – GF], there was nothing falsified, nothing hidden, no thumb pressed upon the scales. (WTIE 109)

In a talk delivered on the occasion of the opening of the archive van Heijenoort said:

Finally, I want to speak on the significance of the correspondence, that is, of the part of the archives that has just been opened. One should not expect startling revelations on the political plane. Trotsky was not a man to have two sets of ideas, one presented in his published writings and one reserved for his private letters. The continuity on the political plane between

the published writings and the correspondence will be apparent to all. There is no contradiction. (Van Heijenoort 1980, 297)

We know today that this is not true at all, for we have van Heijenoort's letter to Sedov in which he discusses the bloc of 1932 and states that he will not submit it to the Paris session of the Dewey Commission hearings (Broué 1980 34-5). In that letter van Heijenoort refers to the other two letters, also reproduced by Broué, in which Trotsky discusses the bloc. As the person who prepared the TA van Heijenoort must have also known the letters to Soviet Oppositionists whose certified mail receipts Getty found and about which Broué remained silent. We also know that van Heijenoort copied excerpts from letters between Trotsky and Sedov. But the full texts of those letters is not in the TA. Van Heijenoort must have known that too.

Therefore van Heijenoort lied in his memoir. He knew that very important materials were withheld from the Dewey Commission. Contrary to what van Heijenoort wrote in 1978 and said in 1980, Trotsky did indeed publicly deny what he was doing in private. He did indeed have "two sets of ideas, one ... in his published writings and one reserved for his private letters." Van Heijenoort knew this. He chose to deliberately mislead his readers.

Let us consider van Heijenoort's claim of 1980: "One should not expect startling revelations on the political plane." How could he have made this statement when the doors to the formerly "closed archive" had been thrown open and it would be subject to the closest scrutiny? We cannot attribute it to a superficial, careless, or hurried acquaintance with the archive, as van Heijenoort himself assumed of Deutscher. Van Heijenoort could have made these statements only if he had first assured himself that the horde of students about to scrutinize the newly-opened archive would not immediately prove him a liar.

The most likely explanation may be that van Heijenoort assumed the second sentence was literally true. Those who would consult

the TA “should not expect startling revelations” because van Heijenoort was certain that those revelations were no longer there – because he himself had taken them out. Getty discovered that someone had purged the Trotsky Archive. That person must have been Jean van Heijenoort.

It may be objected that this conclusion assumes van Heijenoort did not do a “perfect job.” Obviously whoever did the purging did not do it perfectly – or we would have no evidence internal to the archive itself that it had been purged. Despite an attention to detail for which he was evidently well-known van Heijenoort failed to find and destroy all the traces of his expurgations.

It is conceivable that Isaac Deutscher confiscated some materials while working on the last volume of his trilogy. I consider this unlikely for the reasons I examined above. Moreover, Deutscher could simply not have done so without van Heijenoort’s collusion since van Heijenoort might well have noted that some documents were missing. Most likely Deutscher did no more than fail to mention anything that conflicted with Trotsky’s own published accounts and with his own romanticized vision of a heroic, tragic Trotsky. Therefore, the overwhelming likelihood is that the “purger” of the Trotsky archive was van Heijenoort. If Deutscher were involved in the purging van Heijenoort was a party to it as well.

Van Heijenoort had an additional motive, one shared by no other person, for purging the Trotsky archive of incriminating materials. For if Trotsky’s deceptions came to light, Trotsky’s would not be the only reputation adversely affected. Van Heijenoort had known Trotsky’s archive at the time it was being formed more closely than anyone else. He had prepared it for shipment and then gone through it again and again. Of all living persons only van Heijenoort would be called upon to account for any of Trotsky’s secret deceptions, should they come to light.



## Chapter 7. Non-Soviet – Soviet Evidence – Frinovsky, Liushkov, Mastny

The commission of the Central Committee set up by Mikhail Gorbachev to study and, in essence, to find evidence that Bukharin had been unjustly convicted at his trial in 1938 was unable to find any such evidence at all. The proceedings of this commission published in 2004 show the commission members' consternation at this failure.

The result was that the decree (*Postanovlenie*) of the Plenum of the Soviet Supreme Court which was issued on February 4, 1988, and which declared that Bukharin had been forced to make a false confession was never published and remains secret in Russia to this day. Its text, only recently discovered, shows that the central piece of evidence of Bukharin's innocence cited in it is, in fact, a deliberate falsification.<sup>1</sup>

In it the confession-statement of Mikhail Frinovsky, a document that provides strong evidence of the guilt of Bukharin and other defendants in the First and Third Moscow Trials, was deliberately misquoted so it could be employed as evidence that Bukharin was innocent.<sup>2</sup> In fact Gorbachev's experts could find no evidence whatever to support their theory that Bukharin was innocent.

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir L. Bobrov and I have prepared an edition of this document and an accompanying article as Chapter Two in our book *1937. Pravosudie Stalina. Obzhalovania ne podlezhit!* Moscow: Eksmo, 2010. Glava 2. "Reabilitatsionnoe" moshenichestvo, 64-84.

<sup>2</sup> Frinovsky's confession-statement was published in early 2006 and is available on the web at <https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/frinovskyr.html>. I have put an English translation of it on the web here <https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/frinovskyeng.html>. Both Russian and English web versions have the full bibliographical information of the original publication. For Frinovsky's statement of Bukharin's guilt see pp. 40, 42, 47-8, or just search for the word "Bukharin" («Бухарин»).

We now have a number of statements from other high-ranking conspirators who implicate Zinoviev and Kamenev in their own confessions.

For instance, Mikhail Frinovsky stated:

Во время процесса ЗИНОВЬЕВА, КАМЕНЕВА и других, когда было опубликовано в печати о БУХАРИНЕ, перед концом процесса, ЕВДОКИМОВ был в Москве. Он очень волновался и, в разговоре со мной, говорил: «Черт его знает, как удастся выкрутиться из всего этого дела. Никак не понимаю ЯГОДУ, что он там делает, зачем расширяет круг людей для репрессий, или у этих поджилки слабы — выдают. Но можно было бы поставить таким образом ход следствия, чтобы всячески обезопасить себя».

Translated:

At the time of the trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev and others, when the testimony about Bukharin was published in the press, Evdokimov was in Moscow. He became very upset and in a conversation with me, said: "The devil only knows how he [Iagoda] will be able to extract himself from this whole affair. I just don't understand Iagoda at all, what he is doing, why he is broadening the circle of persons for repression, or maybe the nerves of these people are weak – they will give out. But it could have been possible to direct the course of the investigation in such a manner as to leave oneself safe in any case." (41)

## Zinoviev and Kamenev

Zinoviev and Kamenev knew about NKVD Commissar Iagoda's involvement in the conspiracy of Rightists but did not reveal that fact before or at their August 1936 trial. We know this now because in 1997 eight pretrial interrogations of Iagoda were published in Russia in the provincial city of Kazan' in a tiny press run of only 200 copies. In 2004 a semi-official volume of

documents co-published by Yale University and the Aleksandr N. Iakovlev Fund also published one of these interrogations, making it clear that they are genuine.

Iagoda rushed Kamenev and Zinoviev to execution before they could expose yet more of the conspiracy. From other similar events Stalin concluded that the Oppositionists had an agreement to kill any of their number who named names. Stalin concluded that the unsupported word of a former Oppositionist should no longer be accepted at face value. We have reproduced Iagoda's and Stalin's statements in other chapters of the present study.<sup>3</sup> Like Bukharin Iagoda certainly knew about Ezhov's participation in the conspiracy as well, and like Bukharin he did not tell "the whole truth" at his trial.<sup>4</sup>

## Rehabilitation Documents of Bukharin

The decree of the Plenum of the Soviet Supreme Court of February 4 1988 by which Bukharin and other defendants in the March 1938 Moscow Trial were "rehabilitated" is still secret in Russia. Only very short fragments of it have been published.

Some years ago I discovered a copy of the original Rehabilitation Decree in the Volkogonov Archives, on microfilm at the Library of Congress.<sup>5</sup> It bears the title "Decree of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the USSR of 4 February 1988."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For Stalin's remarks online see

<http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/stalinonoppsvi11995.html>

<sup>4</sup> This is confirmed both in Iagoda's confessions in the 1997 volume *Genrikh Iagoda. Narkom vnutrennikhdel SSSR, General'niy komissar gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti. Sbornik dokumentov*. Kazan', 1997, and in the April 11, 1939 confession-statement by Ezhov's right-hand man Mikhail Frinovsky, a translation of which may be consulted at <http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/frinovskiyeng.html>

<sup>5</sup> General Dmitri Volkogonov was given unprecedented access by Mikhail Gorbachev to official, secret archives of the Soviet period. With their aid he wrote highly tendentious works including biographies of Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky. Volkogonov photocopied thousands of pages of documents, and somehow many or all of them were transmitted to Western libraries, including the Library of Congress. For a brief summary of Volkogonov's career and his relationship with politics and archives, see Amy Knight, "U. S. POWs and

The Rehabilitation Decree quotes the statement-confession made by Mikhail Frinovsky, Deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs under Nikolai Ezhov. Together with Ezhov and other of his men Frinovsky was arrested for massive fraudulent repressions and murders, and was tried and executed with Ezhov on these charges in February 1940.

Frinovsky's statement was first published in early 2006. We can now see that the Soviet Supreme Court's Rehabilitation Decree falsifies what Frinovsky wrote.

The Rehabilitation Decree reads:

According to Frinovsky's confessions Ezhov talked with Bukharin, Rykov, Bulanov and others of the accused several times; **he assured each of them that the court would preserve their lives if they confessed their guilt.** (Postanovlenie 1988, 6)

This is a lie. Frinovsky did not say this at all. Instead he *confirmed* the guilt of Bukharin and Rykov as participants in a Right conspiracy, while also confirming that Ezhov and he himself were also involved in a similar and related conspiracy.

До ареста БУХАРИНА и РЫКОВА, разговаривая со мной откровенно, ЕЖОВ начал говорить о планах чекистской работы в связи со сложившейся обстановкой и предстоящими арестами БУХАРИНА и РЫКОВА. ЕЖОВ говорил, что это будет большая потеря для правых, после этого вне нашего желания, по указанию ЦК могут развернуться большие мероприятия по правым кадрам, и что в связи с этим основной задачей его и моей является ведение следствия таким образом, чтобы, елико возможно, сохранять правые кадры.

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Russian Archives," *Perspective* Volume IX, Number 3 (January - February 1998), at <http://www.bu.edu/iscip/vol9/Knight.html>

<sup>6</sup> "Postanovlenie Plenuma Verkhovnogo Suda SSSR ot 4 fevralia 1988 g." Volkogonov Archives, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

Translated:

Before the arrests of BUKHARIN and RYKOV, speaking frankly with me EZHOV began to talk about his plans for Chekist [= NKVD, GF] work in connection with the situation that was taking shape and **the imminent arrests of BUKHARIN and RYKOV. EZHOV said that this would be a serious loss for the Rights. After this, whether we like it or not, by direction of the Central Committee there might be undertaken large-scale measures concerning the Rightist cadres, and that in connection with them his and my fundamental task was to guide the investigations in such a matter that, to the extent possible, the Rightist cadre would be preserved safe.** (Lubianka 3 42)

Frinovsky discussed the “preparation” for the Bukharin trial a second time in another part of his statement. Here too he made it clear that Bukharin and the rest were guilty. There is nothing about “preparing” the defendants to make false confessions implicating themselves. Frinovsky said that Ezhov’s falsifications concerned keeping Ezhov’s own ties with the leaders of the Rights out of the defendants’ statements at trial.

Подготовка процесса РЫКОВА, БУХАРИНА, КРЕСТИНСКОГО, ЯГОДЫ и других

Активно участвуя в следствии вообще, ЕЖОВ от подготовки этого процесса самоустранился. Перед процессом состоялись очные ставки арестованных, допросы, уточнения, на которых ЕЖОВ не участвовал. Долго говорил он с ЯГОДОЙ, и разговор этот касался, главным образом, убеждения ЯГОДЫ в том, что его не расстреляют.

ЕЖОВ несколько раз беседовал с БУХАРИНЫМ и РЫКОВЫМ и тоже В порядке их успокоения заверял, что их ни в коем случае не расстреляют.

Раз ЕЖОВ беседовал с БУЛАНОВЫМ, причем беседу начал в присутствии следователя и меня, а кончил беседу один на один, попросив нас выйти.

Причем БУЛАНОВ начал разговор в этот момент об отравлении ЕЖОВА. О чем был разговор, ЕЖОВ мне не сказал. Когда он попросил зайти вновь, то говорил: «Держись хорошо на процессе — буду просить, чтобы тебя не расстреливали.» После процесса ЕЖОВ всегда высказывал сожаление о БУЛАНОВЕ. Во время же расстрела ЕЖОВ предложил БУЛАНОВА расстрелять первым и в помещение, где расстреливали, сам не вошел.

Безусловно, тут ЕЖОВЫМ руководила необходимость прикрытия своих связей с арестованными лидерами правых, идущими на гласный процесс.

Translated:

The preparation of the trial of RYKOV, BUKHARIN, KRESTINSKY, IAGODA, and others

Actively taking part in the investigation generally, EZHOV kept his distance from the preparation of the trial. Before the trial there occurred the face-to-face confrontations of the arrestees, the elaboration of details, in which EZHOV did not take part. He spoke with IAGODA for a long time and this conversation concerned, in the main, assurances to IAGODA that he would not be shot.

EZHOV spoke several times with BUKHARIN and RYKOV and also in the course of calming them assured them that under no circumstances would they be shot.

Once EZHOV had a conversation with BULANOV, and he began the conversation in the presence of the investigator and myself, and ended the conversation one on one, having asked us to leave.

On that occasion BULANOV at that moment began talking about the poisoning of EZHOV. EZHOV did not tell me what the conversation was about. When he asked us to come in again, he was saying: "Conduct yourself well at trial – I will ask that you not be shot." After the trial EZHOV always expressed regret about BULANOV. At the time of the execution itself EZHOV proposed that BULANOV be shot first, and did not himself enter the building where the executions were taking place.

Without question, here EZHOV was moved by the necessity of covering up his own relations with the arrested leaders of the Rights who were undergoing the public trial. (Lubianka 1939-1946, 47- 48.)

The Rehabilitation Decree falsifies the contents of Frinovsky's statement by giving it the opposite meaning from that it really bears. Frinovsky *confirmed* the existence of a conspiracy of Rights, his and Ezhov's participation in it, Bukharin's participation in it as well, and therefore Bukharin's guilt.

Had the Soviet Prosecutor and Supreme Court found any evidence to impugn Bukharin's confessions they would surely have cited it. Instead, in the interest of their purposes – to make a case that Bukharin and the other defendants at the Third Moscow Trial were innocent – they were forced to have recourse to falsifying Frinovsky's statement, a document that was still secret at that time. Then they kept the Rehabilitation Decree itself secret, as it still officially is in Russia.

The Commission had access to 276 volumes of the investigative files on Bukharin. (RKEB 3 33) The fact that this blue-ribbon commission, with all of the archives at its disposal, could find no evidence to exculpate Bukharin or cast doubt upon his confession is itself the strongest evidence we are likely to ever have – that is, that no such evidence exists.

The following correspondences assure us that the document in question from the Volkogonov Archives, hereafter called the Rehabilitation Decree, is in fact the genuine text of the Supreme Court decree rehabilitating Bukharin.

\* The header of the first, and end of the last, pages of this same document are photographically reproduced in *Izvestia TsK KPSS* 1, 1989 at page 121, and in text format in a volume of “rehabilitation” documents published in 1991.<sup>7</sup> The texts of both correspond exactly to the respective parts of the document from the Volkogonov Archive.

\* In the official collection *Reabilitatsia: Kak Eto Bylo. Seredina 80-kh godov -1991* <sup>8</sup> a quotation is given from the “Decision of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the USSR of 4 February 1988” (*postanovlenie Plenuma Verkhovnogo Suda SSSR ot 4 fevralia 1988 g.*) which corresponds exactly to a passage at the bottom of page 5 of the document from Volkogonov Archive. On page 615 at note 31 another passage is cited from the same “postanovlenie,” and this one can also be found in the Volkogonov Archive document towards the top of page 7.

The Rehabilitation Decree contains the following passage:

Former Vice-Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR [NKVD, GF] Frinovsky, in his statement of April 11, 1939, admitted that employees of the NKVD of the USSR “prepared” arrestees for the interrogations at face-to-face confrontations, pressing on them the answers they should give to possible questions. Ezhov often conversed with those under interrogation. If the arrestee renounced his confessions, the investigator was given directions to “restore” the arrestee, i.e. to obtain from him his previous false confessions. (6)

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<sup>7</sup> *Reabilitatsia. Politicheskie Protsessy 30-50-kh godov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1991), pp 240-1.

<sup>8</sup> RKEB 3 614, n.30.



The same statements are made with slightly different wording in the "Protest, "or request for reconsideration, from the State Prosecutor (*Prokuror*) to the Soviet Supreme Court in this case:

The former Vice-Commissar of Internal Affairs Frinovsky, convicted on February 3, 1940, for falsification of criminal cases and of massive repressions, in his statement of April 11, 1939, indicated that workers of the NKVD of the USSR prepared arrestees for face-to-face confrontations, discussing with them possible questions and answers to them. The preparation ended with the publication of previous confessions concerning the persons with whom face-to-face confrontations were planned. After this Ezhov would summon the arrestee to him or he himself would drop in to the investigator's room, ask the person under interrogation whether he would confirm his confessions, and as though in passing, reported that members of the government might be present at the face-to-face confrontation. If the arrestee renounced his confessions Ezhov would go away and the investigator was given directions to "restore" the arrestee, which meant to obtain from him his previous false confessions.<sup>9</sup>

Publication of the full text of Frinovsky's statement of April 11, 1939, which had remained classified until early 2006,<sup>10</sup> now

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<sup>9</sup> "Plenumu Verkhovnogo suda Soiuza SSR Prokuratura Soiuza SSR. Protest (v poriadke nadzora) po delu N.I. Bukharina, A.I. Rykova, A.P. Rozengol'tsa, M.A. Chernova, P.P. Bulanova, L.G. Levina, I.N. Kazakova, V.A. Maksimova-Dikovskogo, P.P. Kriuchkova, Kh.G. Rakovskogo. 21 ianvaria 1988 g." ("To the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Union SSR of the Procurator of the Union SSR. Protest (in the order of oversight) concerning the case of N.I. Bukharin, A.I. Rykov, A.P. Rozengol'ts, M.A. Chernov, P.P. Bulanov, L.G. Levin, I.N. Kazakov, V.A. Maksimov-Dikovskiy, P.P. Kriuchkov, Kh.G. Rakovsky. January 21, 1988.) *Izvestia TsK KPSS* 1989 № 1, pp. 114-119. p.118. This text is reprinted in the collection *Reabilitatsia. Politicheskie Protsessy 30-50-kh godov*. Moscow: Izd-vo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1991, pp. 235-240.

permits us to affirm with confidence that these statements in the Rehabilitation Decree constitute a deliberate deception by the Soviet Supreme Court.

Frinovsky did state something resembling the quotations above. However, in this passage Frinovsky was not discussing “preparation” of the defendants at the 1938 Trial but a different case.

Later in the same document Frinovsky does comment on Ezhov’s “preparations” for the March 1938 Trial as follows:

При проведении следствия по делу ЯГОДЫ и арестованных чекистов-заговорщиков, а также и других арестованных, особенно правых, установленный ЕЖОВЫМ порядок «корректировки» протоколов **преследовал цель — сохранение кадров заговорщиков и предотвращение всякой возможности провала нашей причастности к антисоветскому заговору.**

Можно привести десятки и сотни примеров, когда подследственные арестованные не выдавали лиц, связанных с ними по антисоветской работе.

Наиболее наглядными примерами являются заговорщики ЯГОДА, БУЛАНОВ, ЗАКОВСКИЙ, КРУЧИНКИН и др., которые, зная о моем участии в заговоре, показаний об этом не дали. (47)

Translated:

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<sup>10</sup> “NARODNOMU KOMISSARU VNUTRENNIKH DEL SOIUZA SOVETSKIKH SOTS. RESPUBLIK – KOMISSARU GOSUDARSTVENNOI BEZOPASNOSTI 1 RANGA: BERIA L.P. Ot arestovannogo FRINOVSKOGO M.P. ZAIIVLENIIE” 11 aprilia 1939. (“To the People’s Commissar for Internal Affairs of the Union of Soviet Soc. Republics – Commissar of State Security of the First Rank Beria L.P. From the arrestee Frinovsky M.P. Statement.” April 11, 1939.) In *Lubianka. Stalin i NKVD – NKGB – GUKR “SMERSH” 1939- mart 1946*. Moscow: 2006, pp. 33-50; also online at <http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/resserach/frinovskyengl.html> Russian original at [./frinovskyru.html](http://frinovskyru.html)

In the course of the investigation in the case of IAGODA and the arrested Chekist conspirators, and also of other arrestees, especially the Rights, the procedure established by EZHOV of “correction” of the transcripts followed **a purpose – that of the preservation of the cadres of the conspirators and the prevention of any possibility of the failure of our participation in the anti-Soviet conspiracy.**

I could cite dozens and hundreds of examples in which the arrestees under investigation did not give up the names of persons with whom they were involved in their anti-Soviet work.

The most graphic examples are those of the conspirators IAGODA, BULANOV, ZAKOVSKY, KRUCHINKIN and others who, though they knew of my participation in the conspiracy, did not reveal it in their confessions. ( 47)

Frinovsky does admit that Ezhov – obviously with the assistance of subordinates like Frinovsky himself – did falsify the transcripts of interrogations in the cases of arrested NKVD men and especially in the cases of arrested Rightists like Iagoda. *But this was done not to make the innocent appear guilty but for the opposite reason: to prevent yet more conspirators, and especially Ezhov and his men themselves, from being disclosed.*

## Statements by NKVD defector Genrikh Liushkov to his Japanese handlers

NKVD general Genrikh Samoilovich Liushkov defected to the Japanese on June 13, 1938, by crossing the border into Japanese-occupied Manchuria. He gave some press conferences and wrote articles attacking Stalin and the Soviet party and government. In his press conferences, arranged by the Japanese for propaganda

purposes, Liushkov claimed that all the Moscow Trials were frame-ups and that no conspiracies existed at all.

But he told his Japanese military handlers something very different. American professor Alvin D. Coox spent years tracking down the former Japanese military men who had been assigned to handle Liushkov. In 1968, and again in 1998, Coox published lengthy, detailed articles about what these men reported Liushkov had told them.

In an article published in March 1939 in Japanese for anti-Soviet propaganda purposes Liushkov claimed that all the conspiracies in the USSR were fabrications. But to his Japanese handlers Liushkov made it clear not only that Stalin himself believed there was a real military conspiracy but that he, Liushkov, also knew that there was, or had been, a real military conspiracy that involved Gamarnik, a member of the Tukhachevsky group who committed suicide on May 31, 1937, when he learned that he would soon be arrested.

## The Tukhachevsky Conspiracy

According to Lyushkov, the interrogations of Deribas, Zapadni, and Barminski established that in the NKVD and the border guard forces, a plot centering on Gamarnik had been fomented. (Coox 1 156)

General Ian Gamarnik was one of the leading figures in the so-called “Tukhachevsky Affair” of high-ranking military conspirators. He is named a number of times in the Third Moscow Trial by Grigori F. Grinko, one of the defendants.

GRINKO:... How did I carry out the tasks that were entrusted to me by this national-fascist organization?

Firstly, connections with the Right and Trotskyite centre. I maintained these connections with Gamarnik, Pyatakov and Rykov. I established connections with Gamarnik through Lyubchenko, who had connections with Yakir and Gamarnik. Through Gamarnik I

established connections with Pyatakov, and then with Rykov. Simultaneously I carried out tasks in foreign politics, in so far as Pyatakov and Gamarnik had told me that Trotsky had agreed to paying compensation at the expense of the Ukraine for the military assistance that we were to receive in our fight against the Soviet power.

Simultaneously with the establishment of connections with the "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" I accelerated the establishment of connections with foreign forces through Krestinsky, with whom Pyatakov had connected me.

I established connections with Gamarnik, Pyatakov and Rykov about the end of 1935. (1938 Trial 71)

VYSHINSKY: In short, in Rosengoltz's criminal activities there were the same defeatist motives as in your activities?

GRINKO: They lay at the base of everything.

VYSHINSKY: So we can say that it is not only Rykov and Bukharin, but also Rosengoltz, I have one more question. Did you know about the Tukhachevsky plot, and if so, from whom?

GRINKO: From Gamarnik. (1938 Trial 87)

Liushkov also confirmed at least the intention of these Party and military conspirators to conspire with the Japanese and to support a Japanese invasion of the Soviet Union:

In concert with Lavrenty Lavrentiev (former First Secretary of the Regional Committee of the Party until January 1937), with Grigory Krutov (shot in April 1938), and with the army plotters Sangurski, Aronshtam, and others, Deribas supposedly intended

**to conduct a putsch in the Far East and to reach agreement with the Japanese for help and for combined operations against the Soviet Union.** In the NKVD the plotters had recruited Transtok, Chief of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Section, and many others. Lyushkov gave the names of about 20 officials, mostly NKVD types, and of ten border guards, all of whom he asserted were involved in the plots. (Coox 1 156)

Coox emphasizes that Liushkov outlined this information to the Japanese in a manner that convinced them that he believed they were genuine:

About this murderous period as a whole, Lyushkov said little to the Japanese, but his enumeration of the suspects was straightforward, without any admission of NKVD-fabricated evidence, such as he said had occurred at Leningrad in the era of the Kirov assassination. (Coox 1, 156)<sup>11</sup>

## Aleksei Rykov

Liushkov told the Japanese that the commanders in the Far Eastern Army had been in secret contact with Rykov. Along with Nikolai Bukharin Rykov was one of the top leaders of the clandestine Rightist conspiracy.

Liushkov confirmed the connection of the Rights, convicted in the March 1938 Moscow Trial, with the military conspirators. For example, Liushkov told the Japanese:

For a long time Deribas had been in contact with Rykov and was the latter's "hidden conspirator."  
(Coox 1 156)

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted from Furr, Kirov 345-346.

Liushkov mentioned Rykov elsewhere as well (see below). He also revealed that the charges against Lavrent'ev (Kartvelishvili), arrested in July 1937 but not tried and executed until August 1938, were true.

Liushkov also revealed that Marshal Bliukher had been conspiring with Rykov and the Rights.

But in private conversations to Japanese officers and others with whom he interacted, Liushkov incriminated Rykov along with Marshal Blyukher and others:

[One] group of traitors belonging to the staff of the Far Eastern Army, people near to Blyukher himself, such as [Yan] Pokus, Gulin, Vasenov, Kropachev and others, tried to get round Blyukher and to draw him into politically dangerous conversations. Blyukher showed them the secret confessions of arrested plotters [without] the authority to do so. After his arrest Gulin told me that after the recall of Pokus to Moscow, Blyukher, when drinking with them, cursed the NKVD and the arrests recently carried out, and also Voroshilov, [Lazar] Kaganovich and others. Blyukher told Gulin that before the removal of Rykov he was in connection with him and had often written that the "right wing" wished to see him at the head of the armed forces of the country. (Coox 1 158)

All this was exactly the opposite of what Liushkov was telling the world for propaganda purposes in his press conferences. The Japanese were convinced that Liushkov was telling them the truth.

Liushkov's revelations to the Japanese are directly relevant to the Third Moscow Trial, where a number of the defendants testified about their involvement in and knowledge of Marshal Tukhachevsky's military conspiracy. Liushkov's testimony is

strong evidence that the testimony at the Moscow Trials was genuine.<sup>12</sup>

## The Mastny-Benes Note of February 9, 1937

Since 1987 we have had archival evidence from a source in the German government, from January-February 1937, that the Soviet military was indeed planning a *coup d'état* and a reversal of Soviet policy from enmity towards friendship with Nazi Germany.<sup>13</sup>

Dramatic indeed! But few people are aware of this evidence. It has been virtually ignored since it was discovered.<sup>14</sup>

In 1987 Ivan Pfaff published an account of a note he found in the Czech national archive. This is a note from Voytech Mastny, Czech minister in Berlin, to Eduard Benes, Czech Prime Minister, dated February 9, 1937. In it Mastny recorded that the German official with whom he had been dealing, Maximilian Karl Graf zu Trauttmansdorff, had informed him that Hitler was no longer interested in a settlement with Czechoslovakia because he expected a military coup in the Soviet Union and a subsequent turn of Soviet policy towards positive relations with Germany.

Most importantly, with regards to the current delays, he considered the possibility, requesting absolute secrecy, that the real reason behind the Chancellor's hesitation was his assumption that, according to certain reports which he received from Russia, there was a growing probability of a sudden turn of events very soon, the fall of Stalin and Litvinov, and the

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<sup>12</sup> See the fuller discussion in Furr, Kirov Chapter 17: "Liushkov's Essay."

<sup>13</sup> Ivan Pfaff. "Prag und der Fall Tuchatschewski." *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 35, 1 (1987), 95-134. Pfaff's translation of the note from the Czech into German is on pages 120-121.

<sup>14</sup> Some years ago I obtained a copy of the document from the Czech national archive, where it is held. Then I paid a professional translator to translate it into English and give me the rights to publish her translation.



imposition of a military dictatorship. Should that happen, the Reich Chancellor would supposedly change the entire position towards Russia...<sup>15</sup>

Documents from the German Foreign Ministry Archive were published in 1974 that showed a special interest in Tukhachevsky on the part of the German General Staff at exactly this time, February 1937.<sup>16</sup>

This is strong corroboration that Marshal Tukhachevsky was indeed planning a coup against the Stalin regime, as he confessed in late May 1937. There is also a great deal of evidence from within the Soviet archives that the Tukhachevsky conspiracy really existed and that the Soviet commanders were guilty.

In the Third Moscow Trial of March 1938 defendant Arkadii Rozengol'ts confessed that he had gotten in touch personally with Tukhachevsky and Rykov on behalf of Trotsky.

ROSENGOLTZ: Krestinsky said that he had instructions with regard to Rykov and Rudzutak. Sedov spoke a lot about the necessity of the maximum, the closest possible connections with Tukhachevsky, inasmuch as, in Trotsky's opinion, Tukhachevsky and the military group were to be the decisive force of the counterrevolutionary action. During the conversation it was also revealed that Trotsky entertained fears regarding Tukhachevsky's Bonapartist tendencies. In the course of one conversation Sedov said that Trotsky in this respect even expressed the fear that if Tukhachevsky successfully accomplished a military coup, it was possible that he would not allow Trotsky into Moscow,

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<sup>15</sup> Archive of the National Museum, Mastny papers (ANM-M).

<sup>16</sup> See Grover Furr, "New Light On Old Stories About Marshal Tukhachevsky: Some Documents Reconsidered." *Russian History* 13, No. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1986; actually published in 1988), 293-308.

and in this connection he referred to the necessity for the greatest vigilance on our part. (1938 Trial 245-246)

Defendants Bessonov, Rykov, Bukharin, Grinko, and Krestinsky also testified about their collaboration in or knowledge of Tukhachevsky's conspiracy.

## Rykov

RYKOV: I knew about Tukhachevsky's military group.

VYSHINSKY: What did you know?

RYKOV: This military group was organized independently of the bloc, independently of shades—Trotskyite or Bukharinite. The military group set itself the object of violently removing the government of the [Soviet] Union and, in particular, it took part in the preparations for a Kremlin coup.

VYSHINSKY: You were aware of that?

RYKOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: When did you learn of it?

RYKOV: I learnt of it from Tomsy in 1934.

VYSHINSKY: In 1934?

RYKOV: Probably. (1938 Trial 84)

## Bukharin

VYSHINSKY: Wait a while, it still remains to be seen how you objected. We want to establish what actually happened. So Tomsy told you that it would be necessary or expedient to open the front?

BUKHARIN: Yes, he inclined to this opinion.

VYSHINSKY: That it would be expedient to open the front to the Germans in case of war?

BUKHARIN: Yes, in case of war.

VYSHINSKY: And what does this mean?

BUKHARIN: It means high treason.

VYSHINSKY: And as to how to open the front, who spoke to you about that?

BUKHARIN: Tomsy spoke about it, that there was such an opinion among the military men.

VYSHINSKY: Which military men?

BUKHARIN: The Right conspirators.

VYSHINSKY: Concretely, who?

BUKHARIN: He named Tukhachevsky, and Kork, if I am not mistaken; then the Trotskyites. (188)

VYSHINSKY: ...Were Tukhachevsky and the military group of conspirators members of your bloc?

BUKHARIN: They were.

VYSHINSKY: And they discussed with the members of the bloc?

BUKHARIN: Quite right.

VYSHINSKY: That means that Kork, Tukhachevsky and the Trotskyites generally intended to open the front in case of war with Germany, and it was of this that Tomsy spoke to you?

BUKHARIN: Yes, that there was such an opinion among them. (189)

## Krestinsky

VYSHINSKY: Permit me to interrogate Krestinsky.

Accused Krestinsky, do you know that the Trotskyites belonged to the "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" of which we are speaking here?

KRESTINSKY: I learnt from Pyatakov, when he spoke to me about this in February 1935, that an organization had been formed, which united the Rights, Trotskyites and military men, and which set itself the aim of preparing for a military coup. I also knew that the leading centre included Rykov, Bukharin, Rudzutak and Yagoda from the Rights, Tukhachevsky and Gamarnik from the military, and Pyatakov from the Trotskyites. He never told me that representatives of national-democratic organizations were included in this centre, and when I was in this centre with Rosengoltz in 1937, there were no representatives of these organizations in the centre then either. (184)

The Mastny-Benes note thus provides strong evidence from a high-placed German source that the Tukhachevsky conspiracy really existed.

Why has this important document been ignored? Because the hypothesis that the Tukhachevsky Affair really existed, and was stopped by Stalin, the Politburo, and the NKVD, is unacceptable to anticommunists and Trotskyists, and therefore to the Soviet history establishment, East and West.

Pfaff and Igor Lukes, who also discussed the Mastny-Benes note<sup>17</sup>, said that Trauttmansdorff must have been lying to Mastny, to try

to “frame” Tukhachevsky and so lure Stalin to kill off his best military commanders and weaken the country. A tale like this was indeed spread right after World War Two by three former German intelligence men. We have discussed it briefly in a 1988 article.<sup>17</sup> This story was widely publicized after the war.

Khrushchev’s men heard about this “SD forgery plot” story and checked in the Soviet archives for any evidence to support it. Khrushchev’s Shvernik Commission studied this story in detail and searched in the archives for any trace of it. They found none, and ended by rejecting it completely, along with the documents supposedly produced in it. (RKEB 2 737-738) But this false story is retained by anticommunists because the opposite – that “Stalin” (the Soviet leadership) actually disarmed this dangerous conspiracy – might reflect well on Stalin.

There is a very large amount of other evidence to support the charge that Tukhachevsky and the rest were guilty. As of 2018 we have many of the investigative files of NKVD men and of military men who were arrested and interrogated. My colleague Vladimir L. Bobrov is preparing some of these important documents for publication.

But here we actually have an archival document – German evidence from a Czech archive, and it is virtually ignored.

We might consider for a minute what WW2 would have been like if Tukhachevsky and his co-conspirators had been successful. The industrial and military might of the Soviet Union, plus its resources of raw material and manpower, would have been teamed up with those of Hitler’s Germany. The history of Europe –

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<sup>17</sup> Igor Lukes, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler*. The diplomacy of Edvard Benes in the 1930s. London: Oxford University Press, 1996, Chapter 4, 99ff.

<sup>18</sup> Furr New Light 302-304 and the footnotes there.

of the whole world – would be dramatically different, and far, far worse.

This fact – and it is a fact, we have a huge amount of evidence to support it – changes dramatically the way historians should look at the history of Europe in the 1930s, the Stalin regime in the USSR, and World War. One could conclude, without exaggeration that in uncovering and stopping this conspiracy the Soviet leadership – “Stalin” – saved European civilization from Nazism. But in the fatally politicized world of Soviet historiography such a conclusion is simply “not permitted” because far from documenting a “crime” by Stalin it tends to make Stalin look good. So, it is ignored, in fact lied about. Stalin “framed” these poor generals! He *must* have done so – and the evidence be damned!

As of May, 2018, the transcript of the trial of the “Tukhachevsky Affair” defendants has also been declassified. Before this date it has always been top secret in Russia today. No one was permitted to see it, not even the most ferociously anticommunist researchers.

We also have two reports of the trial by eye-witness participants. One is by Col. Viktor Alksnis, whose grandfather was a member of the military tribunal who tried Tukhachevsky and the rest. In 1990 he was allowed to read the transcript. Alksnis went from someone who had always believed that the Soviet generals had been framed, to firmly believing that they were guilty. Since him, no one else has been allowed to see the transcript.

The other report is that of Marshal Semion Budyonny, in a letter to Marshal Voroshilov. We study these materials briefly in later chapters.

## Chapter 8. Non-Soviet Evidence – Humbert-Droz, Littlepage, Holmes, Davies

### Jules Humbert-Droz's memoir

Jules Humbert-Droz had been a close friend and political ally of Bukharin's in the Communist International. In his memoir published in Switzerland in 1971 Humbert-Droz revealed that Bukharin told him in 1928 that he, Bukharin, and his followers, the Rights, were already plotting to assassinate Stalin.

There can be no question of this testimony having been forced from him under pressure. Humbert-Droz had long since quit the communist movement and was living peacefully in his native country of Switzerland. Indeed, it is not an important part of his memoirs, occupying less than two pages in a long work.

Avant de partir, j'allai voir une dernière fois Boukharine, ne sachant si je le reverrais à mon retour. Nous eûmes une longue et franche conversation. Il me mit au courant des contacts pris par son groupe avec la fraction Zinoviev-Kamenev pour coordonner la lutte contre le pouvoir de Staline. Je ne lui cachai pas que je n'approuvais pas cette liaison des oppositions: «La lutte contre Staline n'est pas un programme politique. Nous avons combattu avec raison le programme des trokystes sur des problèmes essentiels, le danger des koulaks en Russie, la lutte contre le front unique avec les social-démocrates, les problèmes chinois, la perspective révolutionnaire très courte, etc. Au lendemain d'une victoire commune contre Staline, ces problèmes politiques nous diviseront. Ce bloc est un bloc sans principes, qui s'effritera même avant d'aboutir.»

**Boukharine me dit aussi qu'ils avaient décidé d'utiliser la terreur individuelle pour se débarrasser de Staline.** Sur ce point aussi je fis d'expresses réserves: l'introduction de la terreur individuelle dans les luttes politiques nées de la Révolution russe risquait fort de se tourner contre ceux qui l'emploieraient. Elle n'a jamais été une arme révolutionnaire. «Mon opinion est que nous devons continuer la lutte idéologique et politique contre Staline. Sa ligne conduira, dans un avenir proche, à une catastrophe qui ouvrira les yeux des communistes et aboutira à un changement d'orientation. Le fascisme menace l'Allemagne et notre parti de phraseurs sera incapable de lui résister. Devant la débâcle du Parti communiste allemand et l'extension du fascisme à la Pologne, à la France, l'Internationale devra changer de politique. Ce moment-là sera notre heure. Il faut donc rester disciplinés, appliquer les décisions sectaires après les avoir combattues et s'opposer aux fautes et aux mesures gauchistes, mais continue la lutte sur le terrain strictement politique.» **Boukharine a sans doute compris que je ne me liais pas aveuglément à sa fraction, dont le seul programme était de faire disparaître Staline.** / 380 / Ce fut notre dernière entrevue. Manifestement il n'avait pas confiance dans la tactique que je proposais. Il savait aussi bien sûr, mieux que moi, de quels crimes Staline était capable. Bref, **ceux qui, après la mort de Lénine, sur la base de son testament, auraient pu liquider politiquement Staline, cherchaient à l'éliminer physiquement,** alors qu'il tenait fermement en main le parti et l'appareil policier de l'Etat.<sup>1</sup> (Humbert-Droz 379-380)

Translated:

Before leaving I went to see Bukharin for one last time not knowing whether I would see him again upon my



return. We had a long and frank conversation. He brought me up to date with the contacts made by his group with the Zinoviev-Kamenev fraction in order to coordinate the struggle against the power of Stalin. I did not hide from him that I did not approve of this liaison of the oppositions. "The struggle against Stalin is not a political programme. We had combatted with reason the programme of the Trotskyites on the essential questions, the danger of the kulaks in Russia, the struggle against the united front with the social-democrats, the Chinese problems, the very short-sighted revolutionary perspective, etc. On the morrow of a common victory against Stalin, the political problems will divide us. This bloc is a bloc without principles which will crumble away before achieving any results."

**Bukharin also told me that they had decided to utilise individual terror in order to rid themselves of Stalin.** On this point as well I expressed my reservation: the introduction of individual terror into the political struggles born from the Russian Revolution would strongly risk turning against those who employed it. It had never been a revolutionary weapon. "My opinion is that we ought to continue the ideological and political struggle against Stalin. His line will lead in the near future to a catastrophe which will open the eyes of the communists and result in a changing of orientation. Fascism menaces Germany and our party of phrasemongers will be incapable of resisting it. Before the debacle of the Communist Party of Germany and the extension of fascism to Poland and to France, the International must change politics. That moment will then be our hour. It is necessary then to remain disciplined, to apply the sectarian decisions after having fought and opposed the leftist

errors and measures, but to continue to struggle on the strictly political terrain.”

Bukharin doubtlessly had understood that I would not bind myself blindly to his fraction whose sole programme was to make Stalin disappear. / 380 / This was our last meeting. It was clear that he did not have confidence in the tactic that I proposed. He also certainly knew better than I what crimes Stalin was capable of. In short, those who, after Lenin's death and on the basis of his testament, could have destroyed Stalin politically, sought instead to eliminate him physically, when he held firmly in his hand the Party and the police apparatus of the state.

## Relevance to the Moscow Trials Testimony

Humbert-Droz's memoir confirms Bukharin's confessions, both before and at the March 1938 Moscow Trial, that he and his followers had plotted to kill Stalin. Since Bukharin was already advocating Stalin's assassination in 1928 it stands to reason that he might have done so in later years as well. Valentin Astrov testified to something very similar, as we shall see.

## The Testimony of Two American Engineers in the Soviet Union

Contemporary testimony of two American engineers who had been hired to work in the Soviet Union during the early to mid-1930s, gives independent evidence of some of the striking testimony by Iurii Piatakov in the Second Moscow Trial of 1937. John D. Littlepage and Carroll G. Holmes witnessed examples of different forms of industrial sabotage that closely parallels the testimony given by Piatakov and others at this trial.

### John D. Littlepage

John D. Littlepage was an American mining engineer who hired on to work in the Soviet gold industry during the 1930s. He left

valuable confirmation of Iurii Piatakov's testimony in the Second Moscow Trial of January, 1937. Littlepage himself attested to sabotage in the goldfields.

A short summary of Littlepage's conclusions as expressed in his articles in the *Saturday Evening Post* is given by Sayers and Kahn:

In a series of articles concerning his experiences in Soviet Russia, published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in January 1938, Littlepage wrote:

I went to Berlin in the spring of 1931 with a large purchasing commission headed by Pyatakov; my job was to offer technical advice on purchases of mining machinery...

Among other things, the commission in Berlin was buying several dozen mine hoists, ranging from 100 to 1,000 horse-power... The commission asked for quotations on the basis of pfennigs per kilogram. After some discussion, the German concerns [Borsig and Demag]... reduced their prices between 5 and 6 pfennigs per kilogram. When I studied these proposals, I discovered that the firms had substituted cast-iron bases weighing several tons for the light steel provided in the specifications, which would reduce the cost of production per kilogram, but increase the weight, and therefore the cost to purchaser.

Naturally, I was pleased to make this discovery, and reported to members of the commission with a sense of triumph... The matter was so arranged that Pyatakov could have gone back to Moscow and showed that he had been very successful in reducing prices, but at the same time would have paid out money for a lot of worthless cast iron and enabled the Germans to give him very substantial

rebates. . . . He got away with the same trick on some other mines, although I blocked this one.

Later, Littlepage observed several instances of industrial sabotage in the Urals, where, because of the work of a Trotskyite engineer named Kabakov, production in certain mines was deliberately kept down. In 1937, states Littlepage, Kabakov was “arrested on charges of industrial sabotage. . . . When I heard of his arrest, I was not surprised.” Again, in 1937, Littlepage found further evidence of sabotage in Soviet industry directed personally by Pyatakov. The American engineer had reorganized certain valuable mines in southern Kazakhstan and left detailed written instructions for the Soviet workers to follow so as to ensure maximum production. “Well,” writes Littlepage, “one of my last jobs in Russia, in 1937, was a hurry call to return to these same mines... Thousands of tons of rich ore already had been lost beyond recovery, and in a few more weeks, if nothing had been done meanwhile, the whole deposit might have been lost. I discovered that...a commission came in from Pyatakov's headquarters... My instructions had been thrown in the stove, and a system of mining introduced throughout those mines which was certain to cause the loss of a large part of the ore body in a few months.” Littlepage found “flagrant examples of deliberate sabotage.” Just before he left Russia, and after he had submitted a full written report on his findings to the Soviet authorities, many members of the Trotskyite sabotage ring were rounded up. Littlepage found that the saboteurs had used his instructions “as the basis for deliberately wrecking the plant” by doing exactly the opposite of what he had instructed. The saboteurs admitted, Littlepage stated in the *Saturday Evening Post* that

“they had been drawn into a conspiracy against the Stalin regime by opposition Communists, who convinced them that they were strong enough to overthrow Stalin and his associates and seize power for themselves.” (Sayers and Kahn 223-224; quotation verified against the original *SEP* article.)

At the January 1937 Trial Piatakov had testified that he had met Trotsky's son Leon Sedov in Berlin in 1931. From Sedov he had received instructions to give orders for equipment from two specific German firms, Borsig and Demag. These firms would then give kickbacks to Trotsky, who would use them in furtherance of his conspiracy within the Soviet Union.

PYATAKOV: Without any beating about the bush, Sedov said: “You realise, Yuri Leonidovich, that inasmuch as the fight has been resumed. money is needed. You can provide the necessary funds for waging the fight.” He was hinting that my business position enabled me to set aside certain government funds, or, to put it bluntly, to steal.

Sedov said that only one thing was required of me, namely, that I should place as many orders as possible with two German firms, Borsig and Demag, and that he, Sedov, would arrange to receive the necessary sums from them, bearing in mind that I would not be particularly exacting as to prices. If this were deciphered it was clear that the additions to prices that would be made on the Soviet orders would pass wholly or in part into Trotsky's hands for his counter-revolutionary purposes. There the second conversation ended.

VYSHINSKY: Who named these firms?

PYATAKOV: Sedov.

VYSHINSKY: Did you not enquire why he named these firms particularly?

PYATAKOV: No. He said that he had connections with these firms.

VYSHINSKY: You had connections with other firms as well?

PYATAKOV: Yes, I had very many connections. But Sedov mentioned these firms, apparently because it was with them that he had connections.

VYSHINSKY: Consequently, it was clear to you that these particular firms were mentioned by Sedov for specific reasons?

PYATAKOV: Of course, that is what he said.

VYSHINSKY: And what was the nature of these connections?

PYATAKOV: I have just said that I do not know. He, Sedov, said that since I, Pyatakov, could not steal money, what was required of me was to place as many orders as possible with the firms I have mentioned.

VYSHINSKY: And those firms were named by Sedov himself?

PYATAKOV: Yes, and he added that he would secure the necessary sum from them.

VYSHINSKY: You did not ask how, through whom ?

PYATAKOV: I considered it inconvenient to ask that.

VYSHINSKY: Were you personally connected with representatives of these firms in a conspiratorial way?

PYATAKOV: No. True, I had connections with the chief of the Demag firm, but I never permitted myself to

speak of these subjects in order not to compromise myself and give myself away.

VYSHINSKY: And you did what Sedov advised?

PYATAKOV: Quite correct.

VYSHINSKY: Tell us, what form did this take?

PYATAKOV: It was done very simply, particularly since I had very many opportunities, and a fairly large number of orders went to these firms.

VYSHINSKY: Perhaps orders were given to these firms because that was more advantageous to us?

PYATAKOV: No, not for that reason. As to Demag, it could be done very easily. Here it was a question of prices; it was paid more than, generally speaking, it should have been paid.

VYSHINSKY: That means that you, Pyatakov, by virtue of an arrangement with Sedov, paid the Demag firm certain excessive sums at the expense of the Soviet government?

PYATAKOV: Unquestionably.

VYSHINSKY: And the other firm?

PYATAKOV: As regards the Borsig firm, a certain amount of effort was required.

VYSHINSKY: It was more advantageous to place the orders with other firms?

PYATAKOV: Demag in itself is a high-class firm and no effort was required in recommending that orders be placed with it.

VYSHINSKY: All that was required was to make a big addition in prices?

PYATAKOV: Yes. But as regards Borsig it was necessary to persuade and exercise pressure in order to have orders passed to this firm.

VYSHINSKY: Consequently, you also paid Borsig excessively at the expense of the Soviet government?

PYATAKOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: Consequently, from the standpoint of the interests of our industry and our state, it was not advantageous to place orders with Borsig, and it was advantageous to place orders with other firms, but nevertheless you, guided by criminal motives, deliberately placed orders with the Borsig firm.

PYATAKOV: Yes.

VYSHINSKY: By virtue of your agreement with Sedov?

PYATAKOV: With Sedov.

VYSHINSKY: And did not Sedov tell you that Trotsky had an arrangement with these firms?

PYATAKOV: Of course, that is what he began with. Only he did not say what exactly the conditions were, what the technique was, how it would be done.

VYSHINSKY: And what did he say?

PYATAKOV: He said that if I placed orders with these firms he would receive money from these firms.

VYSHINSKY: By agreement?

PYATAKOV: Yes. (1937 Trial 26-28)



In a few pages of his memoir Littlepage discusses this charge and declares that it was quite credible, as he had had experiences that partly confirmed Piatakoff's testimony.

I was particularly interested in that part of Piatakoff's confession which concerned his actions in Berlin in 1931, when he headed the purchasing commission to which I was assigned as technical adviser. It then became clear to me why the Russians around Piatakoff had not been pleased when I discovered that German concerns had substituted cast-iron for light steel in specifications for mine-hoists.

Piatakoff testified that anti-Stalin conspirators, headed by Leon Trotsky, the exiled former Commissar of War, needed foreign currency to build up a fund for their work abroad. Inside Russia, with so many conspirators occupying important positions, he said it was easy to get funds, but Soviet paper money was no good abroad. Trotsky's son, Sedoff, according to Piatakoff, therefore worked out a scheme to get foreign currency without rousing suspicion.

At his trial Piatakoff testified that he met Sedoff in Berlin in 1931, by previous arrangement, in a restaurant near the Zoo. He added, "Sedoff said that only one thing was required of me—namely, that I should place as many orders as possible with two German firms—and that he, Sedoff, would arrange to receive the necessary sums from them, bearing in mind that I would not be particularly exacting as to prices."

Questioned by the prosecutor, Piatakoff added that he was not required to steal or divert Soviet money, but only to place as many orders as possible with the firms mentioned. He said that he made no personal contacts of any kind with these firms, but that the

matter was arranged by others without any further action on his part than throwing business to them.

Piatakoff testified: "It was done very simply, particularly since I had very many opportunities and a fairly large number of orders went to those firms." He added that it was easy to act without rousing suspicion in the case of one firm because that firm itself had a fine reputation, and it was simply a question of paying slightly higher prices than were necessary.

The following testimony then was given at the trial:

PIATAKOFF: But as regards the other firm, it was necessary to persuade and exercise pressure in order to have purchases placed with this firm.

PROSECUTOR: Consequently you also paid this firm excessively at the expense of the Soviet Government?

PIATAKOFF: Yes.

Piatakoff then went on to say that Sedoff did not tell him exactly what the conditions were, what the technique was for this transfer of money, but assured him that if Piatakoff placed orders with these firms Sedoff would receive money for the special fund.

This passage in Piatakoff's confession is a plausible explanation, in my opinion, of what was going on in Berlin in 1931, when my suspicions were roused because the Russians working with Piatakoff tried to induce me to approve the purchase of mine-hoists which were not only too expensive, but would have been useless in the

mines for which they were intended. I had found it hard to believe that these men were ordinary grafters, as they did not seem to be the kind interested in feathering their own nests. But they had been seasoned political conspirators before the Revolution, and had taken risks of the same degree for the sake of their so-called cause.

Of course, I have no way of knowing whether the political conspiracy mentioned in all confessions at this trial was organized as the prisoners said it was. I never attempted to follow the ins and outs of political disputes in Russia, and wouldn't have known what anti-Government conspirators were talking about if they had tried to drag me into their affairs, which none of them ever did.

But I am absolutely sure that something queer was taking place in Berlin in 1931 during the period mentioned by Piatakoff at his trial. I have already said that my experiences at that time puzzled me for years, and that I couldn't work out any sensible explanation until I read Piatakoff's testimony in the Moscow newspapers at the time of his trial.

Another part of this testimony that some Moscow journalists found it hard to believe was that German firms should give commissions to Sedoff. But I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter that Russian émigrés were in the habit of collecting commissions from German firms for using their alleged influence to throw Soviet business in their direction. The managers of these German firms might consider that Sedoff was simply another Russian émigré, and would make the same kind of a deal with him that I know they had been making for years with other émigrés.

In such cases it was the usual procedure for German firms merely to work the promised commissions into their prices, and if the Russians accepted the prices nothing more was necessary. But in the case of these mine-hoists the commission must have been put so high that the firm had to juggle the specifications in order to clear its profit. When they did this my attention was attracted and the deal was blocked. Piatakoff testified that he had to exert pressure to have some orders passed, and I have told how pressure was put on me.

The testimony at this trial roused a great deal of scepticism abroad, and among foreign diplomats at Moscow. I talked with some Americans there who believed it was a frame-up from beginning to end. Well, I didn't attend the trial, but I did follow the evidence very closely, and it was printed verbatim in several languages. A great deal of the testimony about industrial sabotage sounded more probable to me than it did to some of the Moscow diplomats and correspondents. I know from my own experiences that a good deal of industrial sabotage was going on all the time in Soviet mines, and that some of it could hardly have occurred without the complicity of highly placed Communist managers.

My story is valuable, so far as this trial is concerned, only as regards the incident in Berlin. I have described what that was, and how, so far as I was concerned, Piatakoff's confession cleared up what had happened.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Littlepage and Demaree Bess, *In Search of Soviet Gold*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938. I have used the edition by George Harrap & Co. Ltd, London, 1939, 101-104.

In 1938 Littlepage published three articles in the *Saturday Evening Post* about his experiences in the USSR. In the first of them, "Red Wreckers in Russia," he outlined additional evidence of sabotage involving Piatakov.<sup>2</sup>

## Source Criticism

In 1979-1980 I undertook to check Littlepage's background in order to assess the reliability of his accounts in three articles in the *Saturday Evening Post* and in his memoir, *In Search of Soviet Gold*. I contacted a number of people who had known Littlepage, who had died in 1946. All attested to the fact that he was a technical expert who was not interested in politics and was conventionally anticommunist. He had taken the job in the Soviet Union because work was scarce during the Great Depression in the United States.

I interviewed Professor John Hazard of Columbia University, at the time the greatest expert on Soviet law outside the USSR. As a graduate student Hazard had lived with the Littlepage family in the Soviet Union and knew Littlepage personally. He confirmed the characterization of Littlepage as a technical man with little interest in any kind of politics and no interest in or sympathy with communism.

## Carroll G. Holmes

Holmes was another American engineer who went to work in Soviet industry in 1931. In an article in *Soviet Russia Today* Holmes wrote about his experiences with sabotage in the USSR. He documents the purchase of unnecessary German equipment at a machine-building foundry in Moscow.

I soon discovered that the whole equipment for this plant was being purchased under the same conditions, which could only be described as sabotage. In some

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<sup>2</sup> Littlepage, "Red Wreckers in Russia." *SEP* January 1, 1938, 10-11, 54-55.

cases machinery was ordered far in excess of any possible requirements – in other cases types of machinery they could have no use for at all. The chief engineer, who was an appointee of Piatakov's, then assistant commissar of Heavy Industry, backed the German consultant every time and my plans were rejected.

According to Holmes when he returned to the plant in 1934:

[t]hey were using the German equipment and methods I had opposed. The place was full of cranes and other equipment purchased at the Demag firm in Germany far in excess of requirements.

In 1932 Holmes worked in Nizhnii Tagil in a huge locomotive and rail car building plant. He wrote:

Dozens of conveyors and large amounts of other material for which there was absolutely no need in this plant were being purchased in Germany.

Holmes continues to report that I.N. Smirnov, who was the assistant director of Glavtransmash, the central directorate for the production of transportation machinery, tried to offer him a contract which would have taken him back to Moscow and out of direct contact with the factory. Smirnov told him that "it will be necessary to hold back production of the Nizhnii Tagil plant" and wanted Holmes' collaboration to do this. Holmes knew there was something wrong since the shortage of railroad stock was constantly being made known in the USSR.

I.N. Smirnov was indeed a high official in the Commissariat of Heavy Industry, chief of the directorate of new construction (*nachal'nik upravliennia novopostroek*). He was also the head of the clandestine Trotskyist network within the USSR.

Back in Nizhnii Tagil in January 1935 Holmes witnessed the results of yet more sabotage, which he worked to correct. He then records this incident:

While I was working at Nizhnii Tagil Piatakov arrived one day to look over the plant. He was shown around by Mariasin, chief of construction. They stood next to me, where I was working on the castings that day, and I heard Piatakov say to Mariasin, "Get rid of that American!"

Holmes' article, of which we have only given a brief notion here, is worth study. I have not been able to independently check up on Holmes himself. During the late 1930s rumors circulated among anticommunists that Holmes had somehow been coerced to write this article by the Soviets, but no evidence to support such accounts was cited. Like Piatakov's testimony at the Second Moscow Trial, Holmes's account is consistent with that of Littlepage, a source that can be checked. Thus there seems no reason to doubt it.<sup>3</sup>

## Joseph E. Davies

In his book *Mission to Moscow* U.S. Ambassador Joseph E. Davies recorded the following encounter in Berlin at the German Foreign Office.

Berlin—January 16, 1937

Had an extended conference with the head of the "Russian desk" at the German Foreign Office. To my surprise he stated that my views as to the "stability of internal Russian political conditions and the security of the Stalin regime would bear investigation. My information, he thought, was all wrong Stalin was not firmly entrenched. He stated that I probably would find that there was much revolutionary activity there which might shortly break out into the open.

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<sup>3</sup> Carroll G. Holmes, "I Knew Those Wreckers!" *Soviet Russia Today* April, 1938. Available at [http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrq/research/holmes\\_wreckers\\_srt38.pdf](http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrq/research/holmes_wreckers_srt38.pdf)

The German official spoke these words to Davies at the same time that Mastny was in negotiations with the German official Maximillian Karl Graf von Trauttmansdorff in hopes of arriving at an agreement with Hitler that would guarantee Czech independence. As we have seen, it was a little more than three weeks later that Trauttmansdorff informed Mastny that Hitler was expecting a military coup and a sharp change in political alignment in the Soviet Union.



# Chapter 9. Soviet Evidence – Appeals, Budyonny's Letter, Zinoviev

## Appeals of Moscow Trials Defendants

In September 1992 the texts of ten appeals for clemency of defendants in the three Moscow Trials were published in *Izvestia*, by this time a regular capitalist newspaper. The appeals are those of Kamenev, Zinoviev, I.N. Smirnov, and Natan Lur'e, from the First Moscow Trial of August 1936; of Piatakov and Muralov, from the Second Moscow Trial of January 1937; and of Bukharin, Rykov, Krestinsky, and Iagoda from the Third Moscow Trial of March 1938. Bukharin and Rykov each composed two appeals.<sup>1</sup>

In 2013 the uncorrected Russian text of the transcript of the Third Moscow Trial was published. Some other materials are included in this important book, including texts of the appeals from all the defendants who had been sentenced to death, plus one from S.A. Bessonov, sentenced to 15 years in prison, and from Dr. D.D. Pletnev, who had been sentenced to 25 years in prison. The confessions of Bukharin, Rykov, Krestinsky, and Iagoda were republished along with those of V.I. Ivanov (2 appeals), M.A. Chernov, G.F. Grin'ko, I.A. Zelensky, A. Ikramov, F. Khodzhaev, V.F. Sharangovich, P.T. Zubarev, L.G. Levin, I.N. Kazakov, V.A. Maksimov-Dikovskiy (2 appeals), P.P. Kriuchkov, plus those by Bulanov and Pletnev. No appeal of Kh. Rakovsky, who had been sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, was published. Presumably he did not submit one.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Rasskaz o desiati rasstrel'nykh" ("Story of ten who were shot"), *Izvestia* September 2 1992, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Protess Bukharina 1938. Dokumenty*. M: Mezhdunarodniy Fond "Demokratiia" i Fond Stivena Koena i Katriny Vanden Khiuvel, 2013, 737-750.

All the convicted men affirmed their guilt, often in the strongest terms.

Bukharin, short appeal:

I am deeply guilty before my socialist homeland, and **my crimes are beyond measure**. I acknowledge all their profundity, and all their shame.

Bukharin, long appeal:

I consider the sentence of the court to be just punishment for the very serious crimes that I have committed against my socialist homeland, her people, the party, and the government. In my soul there is not a single word of protest. **For my crimes I should be shot ten times over.**

I do not say, and would not dare to say, that I could atone for my guilt. The crimes I have committed are so monstrous, so enormous, that I could not atone for that guilt no matter what I did in the rest of my life.

Not out of fear of **death, on the threshold of which I stand as before a just retribution**, do I ask the presidium of the Supreme Soviet for mercy and clemency.

I retain knowledge and abilities, my whole cerebral machine, whose activity was previously directed in a criminal direction.

The **counterrevolution** has been crushed and rendered impotent.

I am glad that the proletarian power has smashed all **the criminal business** that saw in me its leader and **the leader of which I was in reality**.

I have translated Bukharin's appeals and put them online in English. They are online in Russian as well.<sup>3</sup>

Zinoviev's appeal is notable for this phrase:

I beg you to believe me that **I am not an enemy any longer...**

I.N. Smirnov, leader of the Trotskyist underground in the USSR, renounced Trotsky:

At the end of my life **I made an enormous mistake: I followed Trotsky**, and for a number of years I struggled against the party as a Trotskyist.

This struggle, oppositional at first, became **counterrevolutionary...I admit my guilt before the party and the workers' state in full measure**. For a long time the party tried to help me correct my errors, but I stubbornly adhered in them. I deceived the party and behaved hypocritically ("two-facedly").

Natan Lur'e, convicted of plotting to murder some of the Soviet leaders, repeated his confession:

Following the assignment of Trotsky, the leader of the terrorist center, I wanted to deprive the Soviet people and the whole world proletariat of its leader Stalin and other leaders of the great Communist party. I repeatedly prepared terrorist acts against Voroshilov, Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, Kaganovich, and Zhdanov, **having armed myself for the fulfillment of this plan.**

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<sup>3</sup> In English: <https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/bukharinappeals.html>; in Russian: <http://istmat.info/node/45780> (short appeal); <http://istmat.info/node/45781> (long appeal).

Following the assignment of Franz Weitz, a representative of the Gestapo, I really was preparing the murder of Voroshilov.

Piatakov:

I disclosed everything that I know about **the counterrevolutionary activities of the Trotskyists**, including about my own activities.

## Interpreting this evidence

These reiterated confessions of guilt are further evidence of guilt and of the genuineness of the confessions made by these defendants during the Moscow Trials.

One could say: "Perhaps they were made insincerely. Perhaps these men reiterated their confessions of guilt in a final hope that doing so might secure a prison sentence instead of the death penalty. Doesn't this possibility annul any evidentiary value these appeals might have?" It is important to respond to such questions, especially since they are so commonly voiced in respect to the Moscow Trials.

Any statement, made by anyone, at any time, *might* be a lie. It is invalid to *assume* that a statement is a lie unless there is some *evidence* that it is. Doing so would lead to an absurd conclusion: it would mean that, *a priori*, no evidence for *any* historical event would ever be valid because, after all, "it might be a lie" (a fabrication, forgery, etc.), even though there were no evidence that it is. If no evidence of fabrication or fakery can be found, to take the position, "Because it *might* be a lie, therefore it is of no interest," is invalid. To do so would be to commit the logical fallacy of *petitio principii*, "begging the question" – assuming that which should be proven.

Yet undeniably there are many people who are incapable of objectively judging the evidence from the Moscow Trials, or indeed any evidence that tends to show that Stalin and the Soviet leadership of his day were *not* guilty of some alleged crime or

other. The fact that this whole line of thinking is invalid does not mean that it is not also very common.

Materialists in any field of inquiry – the sciences are the clearest example – decide truth based upon evidence. History too is an evidence-based field of inquiry. It is an affront to materialism and the spirit of the Enlightenment itself to claim to decide upon the truth or falsehood of any hypothesis other than by the evidence. Yet when it comes to considering the historical events concerning Stalin and the Soviet Union of his time such as the Moscow Trials, many people give their biases free rein and make no serious attempt to be objective, to decide on the basis of evidence rather than according to one's preconceptions.

Let us try to state the problem before us in a more objective way. If one were to formulate the hypothesis: "Bukharin's appeal is insincere, does not represent a genuine confession of guilt," it now becomes clear that one must have evidence to support that hypothesis. A hypothesis that can't be supported by evidence does not require refutation. Such a hypothesis "falls of its own weight."

These appeals support the contrary hypothesis: "The defendants at the Moscow Trials were guilty of the crimes to which they confessed." Moreover, the evidence of the appeals is consistent with *all* the other evidence that exists concerning the Moscow Trials. There is no question of a "preponderance of evidence." There is no evidence whatever to support the hypothesis that the defendants were innocent of the crimes to which they confessed. The hypothesis that the defendants were guilty is the only hypothesis that is supported by evidence.

## Budyonny's Letter to Voroshilov

On May 22, 1937, Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky, one of the five Marshals of the Red Army, was arrested in Kuibyshev. Within two days he had begun to give detailed confessions about his conspiracy with many other military commanders, with civilian

Party leaders, with the German General Staff, and – significantly – with Leon Trotsky, to overthrow the Stalin-led Soviet government.

Tukhachevsky and seven other top military commanders were tried behind closed doors by a military tribunal on June 11, 1937. They were found guilty and shot the next day. During the Khrushchev era Tukhachevsky and the other military commanders were officially “rehabilitated” – said to have been the victims of a frame-up by Stalin and his supporters and declared innocent. From traitors they became regarded as heroes, a status they retain in Russia today.

Today we have a great deal of evidence that they were guilty. To discuss all this evidence, as well as the arguments and evidence that these men were innocent, would take a volume. In the present study we briefly discuss other important pieces of this evidence: the Mastny-Benes letter of February 9, 1937, and Genrikh Liushkov's statements to his Japanese handlers in previous chapters; and, in future chapters, the Arao document, and Nikolai Ustrialov's confession.

Another important piece of evidence is the report to Marshal Voroshilov, People's Commissar for Defense and a close Stalin associate, by Marshal Semion M. Budyonny, a member of the military court. This document is still top-secret in Russia. It has been cited occasionally since the end of the USSR in excerpts only. In the ongoing effort by Russian officials to deny the guilt of these men – and here they follow the Soviet leadership since Khrushchev – those excerpts have been carefully chosen to distort the meaning of Budyonny's document through significant omission. The thrust and therefore presumed purpose of these omissions is to preserve the impression that Tukhachevsky and the others were innocent.

Some years ago I found a copy of the entire text of Budyonny's report to Voroshilov in the Volkogonov Papers in the Library of Congress. In 2012 Vladimir L. Bobrov and I published a lengthy article in which we study the document and review its dishonest use by previous writers. At present this article is only available in Russian.<sup>4</sup>

According to Russian law the transcript of the trial itself ought to have been officially “declassified” in 2012, at the expiration of the 75-year period of classification. Finally, in May 2018, the transcript has been made available to scholars and put on the Internet. My colleague Vladimir L. Bobrov is preparing a transcript and publication of this vital document in Russian. There is, as yet, no translation.

But in 1990 one person did receive special permission from the KGB to read the entire transcript: Col. Viktor Alksnis, at the time a member of the Duma of the USSR.

Col. Alksnis went into the experience convinced that the commanders were innocent victims of a frame-up. This had been a fundamental credo in his family for more than 50 years. General Jan Alksnis, Col. Alksnis’ grandfather, had been a member of the military tribunal that tried Tukhachevsky and the others and that passed on them the death sentence. The following year General Alksnis was arrested, convicted, and executed as a member of a Latvian nationalist organization.

After studying the transcript, Alksnis changed his mind. On the basis of what he read, he now insists that the accused must have been guilty. He published articles in 2000 and again in 2009 about this experience.<sup>5</sup> In a 2002 interview with Vladimir Bobrov Alksnis reiterated his certainty that the generals were guilty. Alksnis said that the transcript is “a cannon aimed at the present” – that there are serious political consequences today in finding the generals guilty:

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<sup>4</sup> Vladimir Bobrov and Grover Furr, “Marshal S.M. Budiennyi on the Tukhachevsky Trial. Impressions of an Eye-Witness” (in Russian). *Klio* (St. Petersburg) No. 2 (2012), 8-24.

<sup>5</sup> “Poslednii polkovnik imperii,” *Elementy* No. 3 (2000). Now online at <http://arctogaia.org.ru/article/423> ; “Ia ne soglasen!” *Russkii Obozrevatel'* October 31, 2009. At <http://www.rus-obr.ru/opinions/4577>

Похоже, что там, в [19]30-х годах, стоит некая пушка, которая может выстрелить по нам, по нашему времени. И все может тогда повернуться совершенно иным образом. А пока... Пока создано определенное представление о тех событиях и делается все, чтобы именно такое представление поддерживать...

Translated:

It seems that there, in the '30s, there is some kind of cannon that could fire upon us, upon our own time. And then everything would turn out to have been completely different. And meanwhile...meanwhile a certain version of these events has been prepared and everything is being done to maintain this version.

## The Tukhachevsky Affair and the Moscow Trials

In the chapter on the Mastny-Benes letter we noted the importance of the Tukhachevsky Affair to the Moscow Trials. The military conspiracy figured prominently in the Third Moscow Trial, where a number of the defendants testified that the military figures were working in conjunction with their own conspiracies.

In the chapter on Liushkov's statements to his Japanese handlers we discussed Liushkov's matter-of-fact revelations that military conspiracies did exist in the Soviet Far East and that Marshal Bliukher had been in contact with Aleksei Rykov, one of the major defendants in the Third Moscow Trial.

In his letter to Voroshilov Budyonny briefly outlines the role of these civilian conspiracies, and especially the role of Trotsky, with the military conspiracy.

Concerning the bloc:

Другими словами шли разговоры о неудовлетворительном руководстве армией, неправильном отношении со стороны руководства партии и правительства к «известным» «большим» людям зиновьевско-троцкистской и правой оппозиции.



Также были подвергнуты резкой критике мероприятия партии и правительства при коллективизации 1930-31 г.г.

В 1934 году от этих «беспринципных разговоров» перешли к объединению единомышленников и в своем кабинете ТУХАЧЕВСКИЙ заявил, что от слов пора переходить к делу и тогда же было решено, что деловыми вопросами должны стоять вербовка единомышленников в РККА. Для этого наиболее подходящими в армии были троцкисты, зиновьевцы и правые. Было решено этих людей всячески популяризировать в общественно-армейском мнении и продвигать по службе на ответственные посты по строевой, политической и хозяйственной линии, а также по вооружению и организационно-мобилизационной работе.

Как на политическую фигуру заговорщики ориентировались на Троцкого и его блок, в который входили троцкисты, зиновьевцы, правые, националисты, меньшевики, эсеры и т.д.

Translated:

In other words there were discussions about unsatisfactory leadership of the army, an incorrect treatment by part of the party leadership and government towards "well-known," "great" men of the Zinoviev-Trotsky and Right Opposition. The measures taken by the party and government in the collectivization of 1930-31 were also subjected to sharp criticism.

In 1934 from these "unprincipled talks" they went over to the unification of like-minded persons and in his office Tukhachevsky stated that it was time to move from words to deeds and then and there it was decided that the recruitment of like-minded persons in the Red Army should become the business of their

work. For this the most suitable persons in the army were the Trotskyites, Zinovievites, and Rights. It was decided to popularize these people in every way in social and military opinion and promote them to responsible positions in military, political, and economic spheres, and also in armament work and organizing mobilization.

As a political figure the conspirators were oriented towards Trotsky and his bloc, in which were included Trotskyites, Zinovievites, Rights, nationalists, Mensheviks, S-Rs, etc.

Concerning the opposition and its ties to Germany:

Видимо, предполагает КОРК, руководители заговора, в лице ТУХАЧЕВСКОГО, от него многое скрыли, как, например, работу ГАМАРНИКА по Востоку и связь с Троцким, Бухариным и Рыковым. Однако КОРК показал, что ему все же было известно, что руководители военно-фашистской контрреволюционной организации смотрят на связь с Троцким и правыми, как на временное явление. Об этом ТУХАЧЕВСКИЙ говорил КОРКУ в том смысле, что троцкисты, правые и т.д. только попутчики до поры до времени, а когда будет совершен вооруженный переворот, то он, ТУХАЧЕВСКИЙ, будет в роли Бонапарта. И 29 ноября 1934 года, как показывает КОРК, ТУХАЧЕВСКИЙ, у него на квартире, об этом заявил совершенно определенно, при всех присутствовавших там.

Translated:

Obviously, Kork suggested, the leaders of the conspiracy, specifically Tukhachevsky, had hidden many matters from him, like, for example, Gamarnik's work in the East and the contact with Trotsky, Bukharin, and Rykov. However Kork confessed that he was aware all the same that the leaders of the military-fascist counterrevolutionary organization regarded the contact with Trotsky and the Rights as a

temporary phenomenon. Concerning this Tukhachevsky had told Kork, in the sense that the Trotskyites, Rights et al. were only fellow travelers for the time being, but when the military coup had taken place then he, Tukhachevsky, would play the role of Bonaparte. And on November 29, 1934, as Kork confessed, Tukhachevsky had in his apartment stated this completely and categorically, in the presence of all those who were there.

Budyonny continued:

ПРИМАКОВ: А отсюда я делаю вывод, что мы, заговорщики, вообразили, что можем руководить великой страной, советским народом и что для этого нужно пол-дюжины, или дюжина Наполеонов. Мы были Наполеонами без армии. Мы работали на фашистскую Германию. Но совершенно ясно, что из этой пол-дюжины Наполеонов остался бы один Наполеон и именно тот, который беспрекословно выполнял бы волю Гитлера и фашистской Германии.

Translated:

PRIMAKOV: And from this I draw the conclusion that we, the conspirators, imagined that we would be able to lead this huge country and the Soviet people and that to do this we would need a half-dozen or dozen Napoleons. We were Napoleons without an army. We were working for fascist Germany. But it is completely clear that of this half-dozen Napoleons there would remain only one Napoleon and that would be the one who most slavishly carried out the will of Hitler and of fascist Germany.

According to Budyonny Primakov and Putna said that they had had special ties to Trotsky.

Primakov:

ПРИМАКОВ очень упорно отрицал то обстоятельство, что он руководил террористической группой против тов. ВОРОШИЛОВА в лице ШМИДА, КУЗЬМИЧЕВА и других, а также и то, что он, якобы, до ареста руководил ленинградской террористической группой в лице БАКШИ – бывшего начальника штаба мехкорпуса и ЗЮКА. Отрицал он это на том основании, что, якобы, ему, ПРИМАКОВУ, ТРОЦКИМ была поставлена более серьезная задача – поднять в Ленинграде вооруженное восстание, для чего он ПРИМАКОВ, должен был строго законспирироваться от всех террористических групп, порвать свои связи со всеми троцкистами и правыми и тем самым завоевать авторитет и абсолютное доверие со стороны партии и армейского командования.

Translated:

Primakov very insistently denied the allegation that he had led a terrorist group against com. Voroshilov made up of Shmidt, Kuz'michev, and others, and likewise that he had supposedly before his arrest led a Leningrad terrorist group made up of Bakshi, the former chief of the staff of the mechanized corps, and Ziuk. He denied that on the basis that supposedly **he, Primakov, had been entrusted by Trotsky with a more serious task – to raise an armed insurrection in Leningrad, for which he, Primakov, must keep himself strictly apart from any terrorist groups, break his ties with all Trotskyites and Rights,** and at the same time win for himself authority and absolute trust from the party and the army command.

Primakov:

В связи с этим специальным заданием ТРОЦКОГО, ПРИМАКОВ обрабатывал 25 кавдивизию во главе с командиром дивизии ЗЫБИНЫМ. По его словам, ЗЫБИН должен был встретить на границе ТРОЦКОГО при овладении повстанцами Ленинградом.

Translated:

In connection with this special assignment of Trotsky's, Primakov had worked on the 25th cavalry division headed by the commander of the division Zybin. According to his words Zybin had been supposed to meet Trotsky at the border once the rebels had taken over Leningrad.

Primakov:

А я, ПРИМАКОВ, являюсь охвостьем так называемой мелкой буржуазии с троцкистскими настроениями, прошедший школу троцкизма от начала до конца в течение 18 лет. В этой школе сосредоточились отбросы человеческого общества. Самым злым и заядлым врагом являлась и является троцкистская оппозиция и люди в ней участвующие.

Translated:

And I, Primakov, am the tail end of a so-called petty bourgeoisie with Trotskyite leanings, having passed through the school of Trotskyism from beginning to end in the course of 18 years. In this school the rejects of human society were concentrated. The Trotskyite opposition and the people who take part in it are the most evil and confirmed enemy.

Primakov:

Я не желаю никому на свете попасть в эту фашистско-троцкистскую яму.

Я должен сказать честно и открыто перед судом, что мы нарушили красноармейскую присягу и нас всех надо расстрелять и уничтожить, как гадов, преступников и изменников советскому народу.

Translated:

I do not wish that anyone in the world should fall into this fascist-Trotskyite pit.

I must say honestly and openly before the court that we have violated our Red Army oath and you should shoot and annihilate all of us like vermin, criminals, and traitors to the Soviet people.

Putna:

Путна в своем заключительном слове сказал: «Конечно, никакой пощады от суда я не прошу, но прошу суд учесть, что я – командир РККА, во время революции дрался за нее. Тем не менее после гражданской войны я стал крепким сторонником ТРОЦКОГО. Я считал: то, что говорит ТРОЦКИЙ – это все правда. Разумеется, я не вникал в большевистскую сущность революции, хотя органически чувствовал, что я с большевиками, но тем не менее оставался троцкистом. Я никогда не задумывался о том, куда меня приведет моя троцкистская позиция.

Translated:

Putna in his final word said: "Of course, I don't ask for any mercy from the court, but I do ask the court to consider that I was a commander of the RKKA, during the revolution I fought for it. **Nevertheless, after the**

**civil war I became a firm supporter of Trotsky. I thought: everything that Trotsky says is the truth. Obviously, I did not understand the Bolshevik essence of revolution although organically I felt that I was with the Bolsheviks, but nevertheless I remained a Trotskyite.** I never thought about where my Trotskyite position was going to lead me.

## Did the Tukhachevsky Conspiracy Exist?

Since Khrushchev, the Soviet leadership, and now the Russian leadership, have insisted that Tukhachevsky and the rest were innocent, victims of a frame-up. That is, the situation is the same as that concerning the Moscow Trials, Trotsky's conspiracy with Germany and Japan, and many other events of Soviet history during the Stalin period.

That mainstream Soviet, Russian, and Western history of the Stalin period is seriously and deliberately falsified there can be no doubt. We have published about this in the past and there is much more to do. In any case, the question in history is not "What is the consensus of experts?" Much less is it: "What is the consensus of anti-Stalin experts?" For all honest researchers the question is: "What is the evidence?"

We have cited only a tiny quantity of the evidence now available that Tukhachevsky and the rest were guilty. Their testimony interlocks with that of the Moscow Trials and the allegations of Trotsky's ties both to the Soviet-based conspiracies and to his collaboration with Germany. There is no evidence that this material has been faked, and every reason to conclude that it is valid.

## Zinoviev's Statements of 1935-1936

On January 15-16, 1935, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and some of their Moscow-based supporters were put on trial for maintaining a clandestine "center" of oppositionists who discussed politics and remained in communication with a similar center in Leningrad. The Leningrad center had murdered Sergei M. Kirov on December 1, 1934. A number of its arrested members had named Zinoviev and Kamenev as their leaders, while not yet implicating them in the murder itself.

On January 13, 1935, just *before* the trial took place, Zinoviev wrote a statement more than 3,000 words in length in which he confessed that there was indeed a "center." This statement was first published in the official journal *Izvestia TsK KPSS* No. 7, 1989, and republished in the collection *Reabilitatsiia. Politicheskie Protssy 30-50-kh godov* in 1991.

In it, Zinoviev stated the following:

Я утверждал на следствии, что с 1929 г. у нас в Москве центра б. «зиновьевцев» не было. И мне часто самому думалось: какой же это «центр» — это просто Зиновьев плюс Каменев плюс Евдокимов плюс еще два-три человека, да и то они уже почти не видятся и никакой систематической антипартийной фракционной работы уже не ведут.

Но на деле — это был центр.

Так на этих нескольких человек смотрели остатки кадров б. «зиновьевцев», не сумевших или не захотевших по-настоящему раствориться в партии (прежде всего остатки «ленинградцев»).

Так на них смотрели все другие антипартийные группы и группки... Все антипартийные элементы выдвигали опять наши кандидатуры.



Translated:

I stated during the investigation that since 1929 we in Moscow have had no center of former "Zinovievites." And I have often thought about this: What kind of a "center" is this – it is simply Zinoviev, plus Kamenev, plus Evdokimov, plus two or three more persons. And they practically never see each other anymore and no longer carry out any systematic antiparty fractional work.

But, in fact, this was a center.

The remaining cadres of former "Zinovievites" regarded it as such. They either did not know how to really dissolve their group into the Party or did not want to do so (especially the remaining "Leningradists").

All the other antiparty groups and grouplets also regarded it as such. ...All the antiparty elements once again set forth our candidacies [in discussions about the Party leadership – GF] (R-PP 160-161)

In an interrogation of December 22, 1934, Zinoviev had denied any continued oppositional activity and any contact with other oppositional centers. Zinoviev knew he was obliged, like other Party members, to inform the Party about oppositional centers but had not done so. As a result, at the January 1935 trial Zinoviev was sentenced to five years imprisonment.

On April 14, 1935, Zinoviev wrote a letter to Stalin, parts of which were published in 1989. In it, Zinoviev wrote as follows:

Одного я должен добиться теперь: чтобы об этом последнем вершке сказали, что я осознал весь ужас случившегося, раскаялся до конца, сказал Советской власти абсолютно все, что знал, порвал со всем и со всеми, кто был против партии, и готов

был все, все, все сделать, чтобы доказать свою искренность.

В моей душе горит одно желание: доказать Вам, что **я больше не враг**. Нет того требования, которого я не исполнил бы, чтобы доказать это... Я дохожу до того, что подолгу пристально гляжу на Ваш и других членов Политбюро портреты в газетах с мыслью: родные, загляните же в мою душу, неужели же Вы не видите, что **я не враг Ваш больше**, что я Ваш душой и телом, что я понял все, что я готов сделать все, чтобы заслужить прощение, снисхождение...

Translated:

Now I want to achieve one thing: that about this last period of my life it be said that I recognized the whole horror of what has happened, repented everything, told the Soviet power absolutely everything that I knew, broke with everything and everyone who was against the party, and was prepared to do anything, anything, to prove my sincerity.

My soul burns with one desire: to prove to you that **I am no longer an enemy**. There is nothing that I would not do in order to prove this...I have come to the point where I stare fixedly and for a long time at your portrait and those of other Politburo members in the newspapers with the thought: Dear friends, please look into my soul, do you not see that **I am no longer your enemy**, that I am yours body and soul, that I have understood everything, that I am prepared to do anything to earn forgiveness and mercy...<sup>6</sup> (R-PP 184)

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<sup>6</sup> Originally published in *Izvestia TsK KPSS* 8 (1989), 89-90.

The highlighted phrase is the same one Zinoviev later used in his appeal of his death sentence, which we have quoted above.

In 1936 the investigation into the Kirov murder had been reopened. By July some members of Zinoviev's group were accusing him of involvement in Kirov's murder. Arch Getty describes some ensuing parts of the investigation as follows:

By 23 July, Kamenev was admitting membership in a counterrevolutionary center that planned terror, but he denied being one of the organizers; he implicated Zinoviev as being closer to the matter. Three days later Zinoviev was confronted by one of his followers, Karev, who directly accused him. Zinoviev asked that the interrogation be stopped because he wanted to make a statement that, in the event, amounted to a full confession of organizing assassination and terror. (Getty Yezhov, 191)

Zinoviev went on to confess to direct participation in the planning of Kirov's murder and that of other Soviet leaders.

Я действительно являлся членом об'единенного  
троцкистско-зиновьевского центра,  
организованного в 1932 году.

Троцкистско-зиновьевский центр ставил главной своей задачей убийство руководителей ВКП(б), и в первую очередь убийство Сталина и Кирова. Через членов центра И. Н. Смирнова и Мрачковского центр был связан с Троцким, от которого Смирновым были получены прямые указания по подготовке убийства Сталина.

Translated:

I was indeed a member of the united Trotskyist-Zinovievist center organized in 1932.

The Trotskyist-Zinovievist center considered as its chief task the murder of leaders of the VKP(b) and, first and foremost, the murder of Stalin and Kirov. The center was connected with Trotsky through its members I.N. Smirnov and Mrachkovsky. Direct instructions from Trotsky for the preparation of Stalin's murder were received by Smirnov.<sup>7</sup>

Я также признаю, что участникам организации Бакаеву и Кареvu от имени об'единенного центра мною была поручена организация террористических актов над Сталиным в Москве и Кировым в Ленинграде.

Это поручение мною было дано в Ильинском осенью 1932 года.

Translated:

I also confess that Bakaev and Karev, members of the organization, were entrusted by me, in the name of the united center, with the organization of terrorist acts against Stalin in Moscow and Kirov in Leningrad.

These instructions by me were given in Il'inskoe in the fall of 1932.<sup>8</sup>

Zinoviev gave more details in other pretrial confessions – we have only one of them at present – and at the August 1936 First Moscow Trial.

By this point Zinoviev had proven himself to be completely untrustworthy. In his December 1934 interrogation he had denied

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<sup>7</sup> Getty & Naumov, 251-252; *Izv. TsK KPSS* 8 (1989) 101; R-PP 198.

<sup>8</sup> Zinoviev. Transcript of interrogation of July 23-25, 1936; translation by Getty & Naumov, 232 (they omit the words "in Il'inskoe"); *Izv. TsK KPSS* 8 (1989) 104; R-PP 199.

any oppositional activity. Exposed by members of his group he had only partially confessed at the January 1935 trial. In letters to Stalin in April and May 1935 he had sworn that he had revealed everything and had completely repented. His July and August 1936 confessions proved that these statements too were lies.

Zinoviev's duplicity had gone even further. During the eighteen months of his imprisonment prior to his confessions of July-August 1936 he had composed a 540-page typescript in which he claimed to confess all of his guilt towards the Party. It was intended to be a demonstration of the thoroughness with which he had supposedly examined his anti-Party actions and repented of them.

We have obtained and studied this lengthy document. In it Zinoviev says nothing about his involvement in the planning of Kirov's murder and plans for future assassinations. He says nothing about the secret bloc with the Trotskyists and the Rights, about which we know from the Sedov-Trotsky correspondence in the Harvard Trotsky Archive. In essence this is a 540-page attempt by Zinoviev to cover up his involvement in the bloc of oppositionists and in Kirov's murder by "confessing" at great length to a host of lesser misdeeds.<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, in his post-conviction appeal of his death sentence, dated August 24, 1936, 4:30 a.m., Zinoviev again used the same phrase – "I am no longer an enemy" – that he had used in his April 1935 letter to Stalin. Zinoviev had nothing to lose by saying it. But Stalin would have been a fool to believe him this time.

In addition to evidence of his own guilt Zinoviev's confessions provide evidence of Trotsky's involvement in Kirov's murder and in other planned assassinations – "terror." When Trotsky indignantly denied this he also denied the existence of any bloc with the Zinovievites. Like Zinoviev, Trotsky was lying too.

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<sup>9</sup> "Zasluzhennyi prigovor."

## Conclusion: The Moscow Trials and the Evidence

The appeals by the Moscow Trials defendants, Budyonny's letter to Voroshilov, and Zinoviev's statements and pretrial confessions are consistent with all the other evidence we have reviewed in our study of the Moscow Trials. They all provide evidence that supports the hypothesis that the defendants' confessions of guilt at these trials were truthful.

# Chapter 10. Non-Soviet – Soviet Evidence – The Arao Document

## Non-Soviet / Soviet Evidence

### The Arao Document

Nikita Khrushchev had Marshal Tukhachevsky “rehabilitated” in 1957. According to the information now public the sentence passed by the Military Collegium of the Soviet Supreme Court on June 11, 1937 was set aside on January 31, 1957. All the executed military leaders were reinstated in their Party memberships by the Party Control Commission on February 27, 1957. (Viktorov 234)

Normally there was some kind of study or report prepared beforehand – usually an appeal, or “Protest” by the Soviet Prosecutor, and a following report by the Supreme Court. Normally too, the Soviet Prosecutor’s “Protest” was based on some kind of investigation. Viktorov gives a very general idea of what kind of investigation took place in 1956. But we can’t tell much about it.

It’s clear that there had been a decision to exculpate the military leaders beforehand, and that the decision was a political one. We have the decree of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU posthumously reinstating Tukhachevsky and the others tried with him to their Party membership. The “Molotov Commission” set up in 1956 by Khrushchev evidently in order to officially rehabilitate the Tukhachevsky defendants among others, was sharply divided. Within weeks after it ceased its operation Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich tried to oust Khrushchev but failed and were ousted themselves instead.<sup>1</sup>

For reasons never made clear, in the months before the 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress in 1961 Khrushchev decided to sponsor another investigative report on the Tukhachevsky case. A commission was established under the chairmanship of Nikolai M. Shvernik, an Old Bolshevik of working-class origins who had spent most of his Party career as a trade union bureaucrat and was at the time the Chairman of the Party Control Commission. It is possible that Khrushchev was hoping that Shvernik's researchers would discover some "smoking gun" evidence of, perhaps, a frame-up of the military men. If so, he was disappointed. The commission found nothing of the kind. This may account for the fact that the report was not published during either Khrushchev's or Gorbachev's tenure.

Shvernik's Commission issued a report addressed to Khrushchev, to which Shvernik added the following note:

Товарищу Хрущеву Н.С. Посылаю Вам справку о проверке обвинений, предъявленных в 1937 году судебными и партийными органами тт. Тухачевскому М. Н., Якиру И. Э., Уборевичу И. П. и другим военным деятелям в измене Родине, терроре и военном заговоре.

Материалы о причинах и условиях возникновения дела на т. Тухачевского М. Н. и других видных военных деятелей изучены Комиссией, созданной Президиумом ЦК КПСС решениями от 5 января 1961 года и от 6 мая 1961 года. Н. Шверник. 26.VI.1964 г.

Translated:

To Comrade N.S. Khrushchev. I am sending to you a report concerning the verification of the accusations

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<sup>1</sup> The documents available related to the "Molotov Commission" are published in Razdel III (Section 3) of RKEB 2, 150-274.



presented in 1937 by judicial and party organs against comrades Tukhachevsky M.N., Iakir I.E., Uborevich I.P. and other military figures, of treason to the motherland, terror, and military conspiracy.

The materials about the causes and conditions in which the case against com. Tukhachevsky M.N. and other prominent military figures arose, have been studied by a Commission created by the Presidium of the CC CPSU by decisions of January 5, 1961, and May 6, 1961. N. Shvernik, June 26, 1964.

## The Arao Document

It's reasonable to suppose that the purpose of the Shvernik commission was to uncover evidence that would justify the rehabilitation of the Party members convicted in the three public Moscow trials and the Military purges. The mere fact of such a study implies that whatever reports had been prepared in 1956 for the official "rehabilitations" had been lacking in such evidence. No doubt the commission had the additional goals of further blackening Stalin's name and, especially, the names of his leading supporters who were still alive – people like Molotov, Kaganovich, and Voroshilov.

The Commission duly reached the predetermined conclusion that Tukhachevsky and those tried and executed with him were innocent. But rather than proving their innocence, the report contained evidence that contradicted it. One bit of such evidence is the "Arao document."

Here is what we know of it, from the 1964 "Shvernik" report to Khrushchev, first published in 1993.

г) Действия разведки Японии и ее роль в «деле» Тухачевского

В ходе проверки «дела» Тухачевского был обнаружен в Центральном государственном

архиве Советской Армии важный документ, спецсообщение 3-го отдела ГУГБ НКВД СССР, которое было направлено Ежовым наркому обороны Ворошилову с пометкой «лично» 20 апреля 1937 г., то есть в момент, непосредственно предшествовавший арестам крупных советских военачальников. На этом документе, кроме личной подписи Ежова, есть резолюция Ворошилова, датированная 21 апреля 1937 г.: «Доложено. Решения приняты, проследить. К. В.». Судя по важности документа, следует предположить, что доложен он был Сталину. Ниже приводится это спецсообщение в том виде, в каком оно поступило к Ворошилову:

#### «СПЕЦСООБЩЕНИЕ

3-м отделом ГУГБ сфотографирован документ на японском языке, идущий транзитом из Польши в Японию диппочтой и исходящий от японского военного атташе в Польше - Савада Сигеру, в адрес лично начальника Главного управления Генерального штаба Японии Накадзима Тецудзо. Письмо написано почерком помощника военного атташе в Польше Арао.

Текст документа следующий:

«Об установлении связи с видным советским деятелем.

12 апреля 1937 года.

Военный атташе в Польше Саваду Сигеру.

По вопросу, указанному в заголовке, удалось установить связь с тайным посланцем маршала Красной Армии Тухачевского.

Суть беседы заключалась в том, чтобы обсудить (2 иероглифа и один знак непонятны) относительно известного Вам тайного посланца от Красной Армии № 304.”

Спецсообщение подписано заместителем начальника 3-го отдела ГУГВ НКВД СССР комиссаром государственной безопасности 3-го ранга Минаевым. Фото пленки с этим документом и подлинник перевода в архиве НКВД не обнаружены.<sup>2</sup>

Translated:

(c) Actions of Japanese intelligence and its role in the Tukhachevsky “case”

In the course of verifying the “case” of Tukhachevsky an important document was discovered in the Central State Archive of the Soviet Army, a special communication of the 3<sup>rd</sup> department of the GUGB [Main Directorate for State Security] of the NKVD [People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs] of the USSR, which had been sent by Ezhov to Voroshilov, the People’s Commissar of Defense, with the annotation “personal,” on April 20, 1937, that is at the time immediately before the arrests of the major Soviet military commanders. ... We reproduce here this special communication in the form in which it reached Voroshilov:

#### SPECIAL COMMUNICATION

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<sup>2</sup> Telegram of April 12 1937 concerning Tukhachevsky’s contacts with Japanese. “Tragediia RKKa,” Spravka of Shvernik report, *Voenna-Istoricheskii Arkhiv*, No. 2 (1997), 29-31. Also in RKEB 2, 753.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> department of the GUGB has photographed a document in the Japanese language that was in transit from Poland to Japan by diplomatic pouch and that originated with the Japanese military attaché to Poland, Savada Sigeru, addressed personally to the director of the Main department of the Japanese General Staff Nakazima Tetsudzo. The letter is written in the hand of Arao, aide to the military attaché in Poland.

The text of the document is as follows:

“Concerning the establishment of ties with a prominent Soviet figure.

12 April 1937

The Military Attaché in Poland Savada Sigeru.

On the matter mentioned in the title, we have been successful in establishing contact with a secret emissary of Marshal of the Red Army Tukhachevsky.

The essence of the conversation concluded that there should be a discussion (2 characters and one sign indecipherable) concerning the secret emissary from the Red Army No. 304 who is known to you.”

The special communication is signed by the assistant head of the 3<sup>rd</sup> section of the GUGB NKVD USSR, Commissar of State Security 3<sup>rd</sup> class Minaev. Neither the photograph that accompanied this document nor the original of the translation have been discovered in the archive of the NKVD.

The authors of the Shvernik report went on to claim that they believed this document was a “provocation,” faked to incriminate Tukhachevsky.

Эта дезинформация была тем или иным путем  
подброшена советским органам японской

разведкой, быть может, в кооперации с польской разведкой, а возможно, и немецкой.

Translated:

This disinformation was passed by one means or another to the Soviet organs [of security – GF] by Japanese intelligence, perhaps in cooperation with Polish intelligence, or perhaps with the Germans.

The Arao Document evidently presented the researchers on Shvernik's Commission with a considerable problem. Here was documentary evidence that Tukhachevsky was in contact with Japanese intelligence – was, in fact, a Japanese spy!

The Commission attempted damage control to discredit their discovery. In 1937 the document had been turned over to a prisoner, a certain R.N. Kim, an NKVD “worker” – his former job was not specified – who had been himself arrested as a Japanese spy. The whole sequence of events merits a careful look.

В связи с тем, что качество фотодокумента было плохим и иностранный отдел НКВД, куда был передан для расшифровки этот документ, не смог выполнить этой работы, заместитель начальника 3 отдела ГУГБ Минаев-Цикановский предложил М. Е. Соколову, работавшему тогда начальником 7-го отделения этого отдела, выехать с документом в Лефортовскую тюрьму к находившемуся там арестованному работнику ИНО НКВД Р. Н. Киму и поручить ему, как квалифицированному знатоку японского языка, расшифровать документ. Ким был арестован 2 апреля 1937 г. по подозрению в шпионаже в пользу Японии, и следствие по его делу вел аппарат отделения, возглавляемого Соколовым.

Как сообщил сейчас в ЦК КПСС Соколов, этот плохо сфотографированный документ Киму

удалось расшифровать после двух-трех визитов к нему. Ким был крайне возбужден, когда сообщил Соколову, что в документе маршал Тухачевский упоминается как иностранный разведчик. Соколов утверждает, что содержание спецсообщения, которое было направлено Ворошилову, совпадает с содержанием перевода, сделанного Кимом, причем в то время Соколов и другие его сотрудники, знавшие содержание документа, были убеждены в его подлинности. Теперь же Соколов считает, что они тогда глубоко заблуждались, и документ, видимо, является дезинформацией со стороны польской или японской разведок с расчетом, что за эту фальшивку ухватятся.

Translated:

Since the quality of the photographic copy of the document was poor and the Foreign Section of the NKVD, where it had been sent for the decoding of the document, could not accomplish this work, the Assistant Chief of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Office of the GUGB Minaev-Tsikanovskii proposed to M.E. Sokolov, who during that period worked as the chief of the 7<sup>th</sup> section of this Office, to take the document to the Lefortovo prison to R.N. Kim, an arrested employee of the Foreign Section of the NKVD who was imprisoned there, and to assign him, as a qualified expert in the Japanese language, to decode the document. Kim had been arrested on April 2, 1937, under suspicion of espionage for Japan and the investigation of his case was led by the staff of the section headed by Sokolov.

Sokolov has now informed the CC of the CPSU that Kim succeeded in decoding this poorly photographed document after two or three visits. Kim was very excited when he informed Sokolov that in the document Marshal Tukhachevsky is mentioned as a

foreign spy. Sokolov confirms that the contents of the special communication that was sent to Voroshilov agrees with the contents of the translation done by Kim. Moreover, at that time Sokolov and other coworkers who knew the document's contents were convinced that it was genuine. Now, however, Sokolov considers that they were then deeply mistaken and that the document was obviously disinformation by Polish or Japanese intelligence who counted upon our seizing upon this forgery.

There are some issues to consider here.

\* Why would a document of this importance be turned over to a suspected Japanese spy for a reliable translation? If Kim had in fact been a Japanese agent, the possibilities this presented to him for creating a havoc of distrust within the Soviet leadership would have been immense. And were there in truth no experts in the Japanese language who were at liberty, and *not* under suspicion of being Japanese agents, to whom the NKVD could have turned?

В своем объяснении в ЦК КПСС проживающий сейчас в Москве Ким подтверждает, что действительно в апреле 1937 г. Соколов, со ссылкой на приказание наркома Ежова, поручил ему перевести с японского языка документ, который никто из работников ГУГБ, слабо зная японский язык, не смог прочитать из-за дефектов снимка. Киму было обещано, что если он расшифрует документ, то это благоприятно отзовется на его судьбе.

Translated:

In his explanation to the CC of the CPSU Kim, who is now living in Moscow, confirms that in reality in April 1937 Sokolov, referring to an order by People's Commissar Ezhov, assigned him to translate from the

Japanese a document that none of the employees of the GUGB, because their knowledge of the Japanese language was weak, could read because of the defective nature of the photograph. Kim was promised that if he decoded the document, that would have a positive effect on his fate.

\* The Commission claims that it located and questioned Kim, living in Moscow in the early 1960s. Kim supposedly told them that he had been given the document at the instruction of Ezhov along with an unspecific promise that it would “affect his fate in a positive manner.”

The Kim of 1962, however, did not testify that he had been pressured to concoct a false reading of the document. Instead he claimed that he had doubted the genuineness of the document from the first, and had written a note suggesting that this was Japanese disinformation.

Как утверждает Ким, после перевода документа он написал еще и заключение, в котором сделал вывод, что этот документ подброшен нам японцами. Такого заключения в архивах не найдено. Документ, с которым имел дело Ким, состоял, с его слов, из одной страницы и был написан на служебном бланке военного атташата почерком помощника военного атташе в Польше Арао (почерк этот Ким хорошо знал, так как ранее читал ряд документов, написанных Арао); в документе говорилось о том, что о том, что установлена связь с маршалом Тухачевским, документ посылается в адрес генштаба. Все эти данные Ким сообщил в ЦК КПСС до предъявления ему текста спецсообщения.

Translated:

Kim asserts that after he had translated the document he also wrote a conclusion in which he deduced that



the document had been passed to us by the Japanese. This conclusion cannot be found in the archives. The document that Kim dealt with was composed, in his own words, of one page and was written on the official form of the military attaché in the handwriting of the Assistant Military Attaché in Poland Arao (Kim knew this handwriting well since he had previously read a series of documents written by Arao). The document stated that a document had been sent to the General Staff concerning the fact that contact had been established with Marshal Tukhachevsky. Kim reported all these facts to the CC of the CPSU before the text of the special report had been presented to him.

This story provides a possible avenue of refutation of the “Arao document.” Kim, the Japanese language expert, wrote that it was a fake, disinformation (though not a forgery – see below), but the NKVD did not pass this on.

That created an opportunity for placing the blame on Ezhov, who had supposedly directed that it be given to a person who might be amenable to concluding whatever Ezhov wanted. Blaming Ezhov would have allowed for blaming Stalin, Khrushchev’s main target, since Khrushchev had claimed that Ezhov did nothing without checking with Stalin first. But Kim instead wrote a note exculpating Tukhachevsky. In this scenario Ezhov did not pass Kim’s note along to the Politburo, but also failed to punish Kim for coming to the “wrong” conclusion.

A further difficulty in the Shvernik Commission’s discussion of the document is that GUGB officer Sokolov, who had brought the Arao document to Kim, knew nothing about Kim’s “note” in the early 1960s. For if he had known, he would never have given the testimony that he did give to the Commission.

Соколов утверждает, что содержание спецсообщения, которое было направлено Ворошилову, совпадает с содержанием перевода,

сделанного Кимом, причем в то время Соколов и другие его сотрудники, знавшие содержание документа, были убеждены в его подлинности.  
(RKEB 754)

Translated:

Sokolov confirms that the contents of the special communication that was sent to Voroshilov agrees with the contents of the translation done by Kim. Moreover, at that time Sokolov and other coworkers who knew the document's contents were convinced that it was genuine.

Sokolov, who had supposedly dealt with Kim directly, could not have believed the document was genuine in 1937 if Kim really had written a note saying that he suspected the document was phony, disinformation. Obviously Sokolov's view about the document *bona fides* would have come from Kim. But Sokolov and his coworkers did believe in April 1937 that it was genuine. Therefore, at that time Kim must have believed that too.

Moreover, how could Kim, a man imprisoned for suspected espionage for Japan, have gotten out of prison to "communicate these matters to the Central Committee" – much less "before he had been presented with the text"? If he had done this, how could Sokolov and his coworkers not have known about all this?

The Shvernik Commission report states that Kim was able to identify the handwriting of the document as that of Arao because "he had previously read a series of documents written by Arao." The Assistant Military Attaché of Japan to Poland would not have been writing to the Soviets at all, much less in handwritten Japanese. So we can conclude that Soviet intelligence had intercepted other handwritten documents by Arao, intended for delivery to Japan, before this, and had given them to the same R.N. Kim to translate. This specific Arao Document was indeed a bombshell, or so it appears to us today. But it must have been far

from the first document by Arao that Soviet intelligence had received.

This means that Kim's story of the early '60s about his "note" was itself a lie. Everyone concerned – Kim, Sokolov, and no doubt Ezhov and Voroshilov – had believed the note was genuine.

The Commission chose not to confront these problems, and dismissed the Arao Document as follows:

Оценивая имеющиеся японские материалы, можно сделать следующие выводы.

Во-первых, «документ Арао,» посланный Ежовым Ворошилову, надо признать провокационным. Эта дезинформация была тем или иным путем подброшена советским органам японской разведкой, быть может, в кооперации с польской разведкой, а возможно, и немецкой.

Не исключено также, что этот документ был сфабрикован в НКВД с прямой провокационной целью или что так называемый тайный посланец, если он так объявил себя в Варшаве, в действительности являлся агентом НКВД.

Во-вторых, несмотря на сомнительную ценность в качестве свидетельства против Тухачевского, «документ Арао,» дошедший до Ежова, Ворошилова и, вероятно, до Сталина, мог все же ими браться в расчет и сыграть в условиях апреля - мая 1937 года определенную роль в формировании обвинения против Тухачевского.

Вместе с тем, видимо, именно неправдоподобностью этого документа надо объяснить тот факт, что на следствии вопрос о «тайном посланце Тухачевского» и о связях его с японской разведкой вообще никак не

допрашивался. В деле нет ни самого документа, ни его копии. Никакой оперативной разработки вокруг этого перехваченного японского документа не проводилось; его использовали против Тухачевского в том виде, в каком он оказался в руках работника НКВД.

Translated:

After evaluation of the available Japanese materials it is possible to make the following deductions.

First: we must consider the Arao Document that Ezhov sent to Voroshilov as a provocation. This disinformation was passed by one means or another to the Soviet organs by Japanese intelligence, perhaps in cooperation with Polish intelligence, and possibly also with German intelligence.

The possibility cannot be excluded that the document was fabricated by the NKVD with a directly provocational purpose or that the secret sender, if he called himself that in Warsaw, was in reality an NKVD agent.

Second, despite the dubious value as evidence against Tukhachevsky the Arao Document that reached Ezhov, Voroshilov, and probably Stalin also, could have been taken under consideration by them and in April – May 1937 could have played a certain role in the formation of accusations against Tukhachevsky.

At the same time, the fact that during the investigation the question about the “secret representative of Tukhachevsky” and about his ties with Japanese intelligence played no role in the interrogations could be explained precisely by the implausibility of this document. In the [Tukhachevsky Affair] case file there is neither the document itself nor a copy of it. No operational work was developed concerning this

seized Japanese document; it was used against Tukhachevsky in the same form in which it existed in the hands of the NKVD worker.

According to the Commission's analysis, the Document was some kind of provocation by either Japanese, Polish, or German intelligence, or some combination of them, or possibly even an NKVD forgery – despite Kim's attestation that he recognized Arao's handwriting.

The Commission then contradicted itself by claiming that the fact the document was not used in the investigation and prosecution of Tukhachevsky at all and that this could be explained by "precisely the improbability of this document" – and *then* claims that "it was used against Tukhachevsky." But if the case against Tukhachevsky was intentionally fabricated from the beginning, the "improbability" of the document – assuming that it was "improbable" – would not have been an issue. Furthermore, NKVD man Sokolov, who dealt with Kim, thought it was genuine.

We can best make sense of all the contradictions in the Shvernik Commission's report about the Arao Document by recognizing that its editors were trying to find a reason to dismiss this document, since they had been tasked to find evidence to exonerate Tukhachevsky and the rest. One hypothesis would be that those who compiled the report did not wish to conceal from their powerful superiors this document that their researchers had uncovered, so they supplied an explanation that would permit their superiors to disregard it, if they so wished.

Since the Commission's report informs us that Voroshilov had seen the document and, therefore, Stalin knew about it too, the most likely reason it was not used in the prosecution of Tukhachevsky is that it was not needed – other evidence was available. We can't know for certain, since the Tukhachevsky case file (*delo*), like those of all the other military defendants, has only been declassified in part, and only in 2017-2018. As yet very few researchers have been able to see even parts of it. The fact that the

Arao document was not used in the case against Tukhachevsky does not imply anything about whether it was genuine or not.

We do not know whether the actual Arao Document is still extant somewhere. We know about it only from the Shvernik Report. Either it is among the Tukhachevsky investigation materials that are still top-secret in Russia today, or it has been destroyed. It is not mentioned by Iulia Kantor, author of three books on Tukhachevsky, who was given special permission by the Marshal's family to see his investigative file and in whose works a great deal of evidence pointing not towards Tukhachevsky's innocence, but towards his guilt, may be found. Kantor herself, with no pretense of objectivity, firmly takes the position that all the military commanders were innocent victims of a frame-up.

The Arao Document represents good evidence that Tukhachevsky was in direct contact with the Japanese military figures in Poland. The attempted refutation of the Document contained in that report is filled with contradictions and should be discarded.

We have documented in another chapter that the Tukhachevsky Affair features prominently in the Third Moscow Trial. We have a great deal of documentary evidence that the Tukhachevsky conspiracy did exist. This evidence is relevant to our task of verifying the Moscow Trials testimony from other, independent sources.



# Chapter 11. Soviet Evidence – Ustrialov's Confession

## Ustrialov on Tukhachevsky's Contacts with the Japanese

The consideration of Nikolai Ustrialov's confession requires some explanation. Ustrialov's is a Soviet – NKVD confession-interrogation. This will raise in the minds of some readers the possibility that Ustrialov might have been "forced" to falsely confess, that these confessions might be fabrications, and so on.

In reality, there is no evidence that this is the case and much evidence against it. Therefore, it may be useful to examine this issue here.

Ustrialov's confession cannot have been an attempt to "frame" Tukhachevsky or even to get additional evidence against him, since by the date it was given – July 14, 1937 – Tukhachevsky, executed on June 12, 1937, had been dead for more than a month.

Might it be an attempt to "frame," or at least get more evidence against, Bukharin and the Rights? As we shall see, they are in fact mentioned in the confession. But this is impossible for a number of reasons:

- \* The allusions to Bukharin and the Rights are all hearsay. Ustrialov simply reported what one Japanese journalist-spy who called himself Nakamura had told him. Nakamura had no direct knowledge about the Rights. He just repeated what he had been told by still other parties. Such testimony would have been useless in any criminal trial, including in the USSR in the 1930s.

- \* Why would the NKVD or prosecution fabricate material that could not be used? When, during the Ezhovshchina or "Great

Terror” the NKVD fabricated confessions they did so to falsely incriminate innocent people. In this case they would have fabricated direct testimony, forced Ustrialov to say that he had direct knowledge of the Rights’ desires to overthrow the Soviet government, make deals with Japan and Germany, and so on. But they did not do that.

\* Liudmila A. Bystriantseva, the expert on Ustrialov’s life and thought who edited and introduced this confession, is convinced that it is genuine despite the fact that it contradicts the reigning historical paradigm according to which Tukhachevsky et al. were innocent, “framed” by Stalin, Ezhov, or both. At the end of this chapter we will review what she says.

\* The confession might well be useful to the NKVD for further investigation. But that would mean that the investigators were in fact trying to discover the truth. That, in turn, would mean that they did not fabricate Ustrialov’s confession.

\* Ustrialov’s confession is consistent with the Soviet charges against Tukhachevsky and against the Rights. We now have good corroborative evidence, including non-Soviet evidence, that these charges were accurate. The prevailing paradigm of the Moscow Trials and the Tukhachevsky Affair cannot account for this evidence. Therefore, the prevailing paradigm must be discarded.

All this suggests that the confession is genuine. We have no grounds to think that it might be a fabrication by the investigators or the prosecution, and every reason to think it was not. And the confession itself is very interesting – in fact, a bombshell. Not surprisingly, it has been virtually ignored by those who are committed not to discovering the truth but to what I have elsewhere called the “anti-Stalin paradigm” of Soviet history.

These are our grounds for including this somewhat lengthy discussion of Ustrialov’s confession here.



Nikolai Vasil'evich Ustrialov was a Russian philosopher who had taught law at Moscow University during World War I. He had been a member of the Kadet (Constitutional Democrat) Party, the leading party of businessmen and intellectuals. During the Civil War he supported the White generals Kolchak and Denikin against the Bolsheviks.

Eventually he settled in Harbin, China, and worked for the China East Railroad, jointly owned by China and the USSR. During his years of exile he visited Japan several times and met with Japanese government figures. These visits became the focus of interest. When the railroad was sold to Japan in 1935 Ustrialov returned voluntarily to the USSR with other Russian nationals.

Once back in the USSR Ustrialov was hired to teach as a professor of economic geography at two universities in Moscow. Clearly Soviet authorities believed that he had accepted the Bolshevik Revolution and his stated desire to support the USSR for nationalist reasons.

Ustrialov was arrested on June 6, 1937.

В СССР работал профессором экономической географии в Московском институте инженеров транспорта и некоторое время — в Московском государственном университете. Но 6 июня 1937 года был арестован органами НКВД СССР, а 14 сентября 1937 года военной коллегией Верховного суда СССР по обвинению в "шпионаже, контрреволюционной деятельности и антисоветской агитации" (статьи 58-1, 58-8, 58-10, 58-11 УК РСФСР) приговорён к расстрелу. Приговор приведён в исполнение в тот же день в Москве.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Ustrialov, Nikolai Vasil'evich." (Biographical article). At <http://www.hrono.info/biograf/ustryalov.html>

Translated:

In the USSR he worked as a professor of Economic Geography at the Moscow Institute of Transport Engineers and for a time at Moscow State University. But on June 6, 1937, he was arrested by the NKVD of the USSR, and on September 14, 1937, he was sentenced to be shot by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR for "espionage, counterrevolutionary activity and anti-Soviet agitation" (articles 58-1, 58-8 and 58-11 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Republic). The sentence was carried out on the same day in Moscow.

From another source we learn that Ustrialov pled guilty at trial to espionage for Japan.

Судом Устрялов признан виновным в том, что "с 1928 г. являлся агентом японской разведки и проводил шпионскую работу. В 1935 г. установил контрреволюционную связь с Тухачевским, от которого знал о подготовке террористических актов против руководителей ВКП(б) и Советского правительства и о связи с антисоветской террористической организацией правых. Кроме того, Устрялов вел активную контрреволюционную пропаганду и распространял клевету на руководство ВКП(б)" (из приговора, л.д. 52). В тот же день приговор в отношении Устрялова Н.В. был приведен в исполнение (л.д. 53). ... [О]бвинение в шпионаже и иной контрреволюционной деятельности основано только на признательных показаниях Устрялова, которые он дал на предварительном следствии и подтвердил в судебном заседании.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bystriantseva, L.A. "Arkhivnye materialy po N.V. Ustrialovu (1890-1937)." [http://lib.irismedia.org/sait/lib\\_ru/lib.ru/politolog/ustrialov/documentation.txt.htm](http://lib.irismedia.org/sait/lib_ru/lib.ru/politolog/ustrialov/documentation.txt.htm)

Translated:

Ustrialov was declared guilty by the court in that "since 1928 he has been an agent of Japanese intelligence and has carried out espionage. In 1935 he established counterrevolutionary contact with Tukhachevsky, from whom he learned about the preparation of terrorist acts against the leaders of the VPK(b) and the Soviet government and about contact with the anti-Soviet terrorist organization of the Rights. In addition Ustrialov conducted active counterrevolutionary propaganda and slandered the leadership of the VKP(b)" (from the sentence, p. 52). "The sentence against Ustrialov N.V. was carried out the same day (p. 53)." ... The accusation of espionage and other counterrevolutionary activity was based solely on Ustrialov's confessions, which he gave during the preliminary investigation and confirmed at trial.

Ustrialov was himself convicted of espionage for Japan. This constitutes our main interest in him here. It's important to note, however, that Ustrialov did *not* confess to everything his interrogator accused him of. Specifically, he rejected the accusation that he had returned to the USSR at the instruction of the Japanese.

ВОПРОС: Вы напрасно сводите свою деятельность только к контрреволюционной пропаганде. Следствию известно, что в СССР вы приехали по прямому предложению японской разведки, со специальными заданиями — вы признаете это?

ОТВЕТ: Я этого не признаю.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bystriantseva, L.A. "Ustremlenie k istine. Protokol doporosa N.V. Ustrialova." *Klio* (St. Petersburg) No. 1 (1999), 246-256.

Translated:

QUESTION: It is useless for you to reduce your activity only to counterrevolutionary propaganda. The investigation is aware that you arrived in the USSR upon the direct proposal of Japanese intelligence with special assignments – do you admit this?

ANSWER: I do not admit this.

This kind of differentiated confession -- confession of guilt to some charges while rejecting other charges – suggests an effort on the part of the defendant to be truthful at least about the charges to which the defendant has confessed guilt.

Bystriantseva argues convincingly that Ustrialov did not “spy” in the ordinary sense of the word, and in the sense that the NKVD interrogator at first accused him of. But she fails to point out the obvious: that Ustrialov's discussion with the Japanese agent Nakamura (see below) itself constituted a form of espionage – that is, secret collaboration with a hostile foreign power – if not reported to the authorities.

The transcript of one of his interrogations, that of July 14, 1937, was published in 1999. Here we quote only those sections of the interview that are directly relevant to the question of Japanese collaboration.

In this interrogation Ustrialov outlined the contents of a conversation he had with Tukhachevsky at Tukhachevsky's own home sometime in the autumn, probably September, of 1936. He then summarizes a ninety-minute discussion he had in late December 1936 with a Japanese agent, one Nakamura, who was traveling under journalistic cover.

We'll comment on these two sections of Ustrialov's confession separately. After that, we'll consider issues of authenticity.

## Part One. Autumn 1936: Ustrialov discusses his talk with Marshal Tukhachevsky

ВОПРОС: Изложите содержание этой беседы?

ОТВЕТ: Я постараюсь дословно изложить нашу беседу — поскольку она мне осталась памятной. Тухачевский вначале коснулся основных проблем нашей политики и интересовался моей точкой зрения. Я ответил, что, по моему мнению, в данной исторической обстановке внешняя политика Советского государства ведется по единственному возможному для нее курсу, если иметь в виду ориентацию на мир. Я почувствовал, что мой собеседник не разделяет этой точки зрения. В очень осторожных, скупых, окольных выражениях он стал говорить, что ориентация на мир требовала бы некоторого смягчения наших отношений с Германией, ныне отравляющих всю международную атмосферу.

Я немедленно заметил, что отнюдь не мы виноваты в напряженности этих отношений. Я твердо убежден, что, покуда фашизм в Германии у власти, никакие улучшения наших отношений не возможны.

Экспансия на Восток — краеугольный камень внешнеполитической программы Гитлера. «Да, но на востоке Германии лежит Польша, — бросил реплику Тухачевский. — Территориальные вопросы допускают различные варианты решений.” Из дальнейших, весьма, впрочем, осторожных его высказываний, получилось, что он мыслит себе совсем иной рисунок европейского равновесия, нежели тот, который существует теперь. В его словах воскресла

известная концепция так называемой «германской ориентации», о которой так много говорилось и писалось в свое время.

Было совершенно очевидно, за чей счет мыслилось в таком случае урегулирование спорных территориальных проблем «Не каждая польская кампания кончалась Рижским договором — был ведь в истории «Венский конгресс»».

Этот афоризм моего собеседника был более чем ясным намеком.

Я — «Но ведь наши противоречия с Германией не исчерпываются территориальными проблемами. Нельзя упустить из вида глубочайшие противоположности социально-политических режимов.»

Тухачевский — «Да, конечно, но режимы развиваются, эволюционируют. В политике нужна гибкость. Всякий конфликт есть начало соглашения.»

<c.253>

Я — «Однако есть основные, фундаментальные установки, которые составляют сущность политического строя. У нас эти установки определены программой правящей партии».

Тухачевский — «Да, но кроме программы есть люди. Партия — это люди. В партии есть **реальные политики**, и им принадлежит будущее».

Из дальнейших его высказываний явствовало, что он не только «теоретизирует», но и уже нащупал кое-какую почву под ногами. «**Реальные политики**» в партии не фикция, а реальность. Не

фикция — и слова о новом курсе по отношению к Германии

Из этих слов, несколько отрывочных, но все же достаточно ясных, мне не трудно было понять основные политические устремления моего собеседника. Мне оставалось задать лишь ему один вопрос о конкретной внутривнутриполитической программе тех **«реальных политиков»** в партии, о которых он упоминал. На этот вопрос Тухачевский ответил, что их внутривнутриполитическая программа исходит из необходимости сгладить остроту противоречий между Советским государством и внешним миром, хотя бы даже за счет некоторого отступления от проводимой ныне партией политической линии. Поскольку такое смягчение противоречий диктуется обстановкой — на него нужно идти.

После этого ответа я окончательно понял, что под кличкой **«реальных политиков»** Тухачевский имеет в виду правую партийную оппозицию, бухаринско-рыковскую группу.

Translated:

QUESTION: Describe the contents of this conversation.

ANSWER: I will try to present our conversation word for word insofar as I am able to remember it. Tukhachevsky first touched upon the main problems of our politics and expressed interest in my point of view. I told him that, in my opinion, in the current historic situation, Soviet foreign policy is being conducted upon the only possible line, if we bear in mind the orientation toward peace. I felt that my companion did not share this point of view. In very careful, laconic, roundabout terms, he began to say

that the orientation towards peace would require some mitigation of our relations with Germany, which now poison the whole international atmosphere.

I immediately remarked that we are not to blame for the tensions in these relations; that I firmly believed that as long as fascism is in power in Germany no improvement of our relations is possible.

Expansion to the East is the cornerstone of Hitler's foreign policy. "Yes, but to the East of Germany is Poland – replied Tukhachevsky. - Territorial questions allow for a variety of solutions." From his further, although cautious, statements it turned out that he had a very different picture of the European equilibrium than the one that now exists. In his words the well-known concept of the so-called "German orientation" was revived, about which so much was said and written at one time.

It was clear at whose expense in such a case the settlement of the disputed territorial problems was conceived. "Not every Polish campaign ended in a Riga Treaty. History also knows the 'Congress of Vienna.'"

This aphorism by my interlocutor was a more than clear hint.

I - "But our contradictions with Germany are not limited to territorial problems. We cannot lose sight of the profound opposition of our social and political regimes."

Tukhachevsky - "Yes, of course, but regimes develop, they evolve.<sup>4</sup> In politics we need flexibility. Every conflict is the beginning of the agreement."

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<sup>4</sup> Ustrialov was a central figure in the "Smenovekhist" movement. He believed that the USSR would "evolve" towards a more bourgeois capitalist form of state. This fact may explain



<p.253>

I - "However, there are basic, fundamental conditions which constitute the essence of the political system. With us these conditions are defined by the program of the ruling party."

Tukhachevsky - "Yes, but besides the program there are people. The party is people. In the Party there are **realist politicians**<sup>5</sup>, and the future belongs to them."

From his further remarks it was clear that he was not only "theorizing," but already felt a certain amount of ground under his feet. The "**realist politicians**" in the Party were not a fiction but a reality. Not fiction either were the words about a new course towards Germany

From these words, somewhat disjointed but still quite clear, it was not hard for me to understand the basic political aspirations of my interlocutor. It only remained for me to ask him one question about the specific domestic program of those "**realist politicians**" in the Party that he had mentioned. To this question Tukhachevsky replied that their internal political program was based on the need to smooth the acuteness of the contradictions between the Soviet state and the outside world, even at the cost of a certain retreat from the political line currently being carried out by the Party. Since this lessening of contradictions is dictated by the situation – it was necessary to take this path.

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Tukhachevsky's interest in him. According to Bysriantseva, Ustrialov had abandoned these views by the mid-1930s, but he was – and is – still famous for them.

<sup>5</sup> I have put the phrase "realist politicians" in boldface in both Russian and English in order to draw the reader's attention to it.

After this response I finally realized that under the nickname of “**realist politicians**” Tukhachevsky had in mind the Right opposition in the party, the Bukharin-Rykov group.

## Analysis

A significant point for our purposes is that the main subject of Ustrialov's interrogation was Marshal Tukhachevsky. At the date of the interrogation, July 14, 1937, Tukhachevsky and the seven other high-ranking military leaders who had been arrested with him had all been tried and executed. What would have been the purpose of fabricating an interrogation that implicated a person already dead and other minor figures some of whom, as we shall see, were never repressed?

Ustrialov had been arrested on June 6, 1937, a few days before the trial and execution of Tukhachevsky and the rest and during the continuing investigation of the military conspiracy. We don't know what led to Ustrialov's arrest.

As an attempt to investigate networks of Japanese espionage the interrogation makes perfect sense. The NKVD was also gathering further information on the Rights, on their connection to the military conspirators and others. Bukharin had already begun to confess about this in his first confession of June 2, 1937. (Furr and Bobrov Bukharin) So had Iagoda, Krestinsky, and others who would eventually figure in the March 1938 Moscow Trial.

Ustrialov knew that Bukharin and Rykov had been arrested – their arrests had taken place on February 27, 1937, during the February-March 1937 Central Committee Plenum. But he could not have known how closely the confessions they had already made were consistent with what Ustrialov reported about Tukhachevsky's views.

As Ustrialov described his conversation with Tukhachevsky, it began by his professing his loyalty to the Soviet “orientation to peace” – no doubt the attempted rapprochement with the Western

capitalists, entry into the United Nations, the new Constitution, and other reforms. Tukhachevsky immediately began to question this policy, which was also predicated on an attempt to build "collective security" – a set of alliances – against Hitler's Germany.

The Marshal said that "some degree of softening" (*nekotorogo smiagcheniia*) of Soviet opposition to Nazi Germany was needed. He said that the hostile relations between the USSR and Nazi Germany were "poisoning the whole international atmosphere." That is, Tukhachevsky was telling Ustrialov that he thought the whole policy of anti-Fascism and collective security against Nazi Germany was wrong.

In Ustrialov's words Tukhachevsky was "resurrecting" the notion of a "German orientation." The two "losers" of the Versailles peace after World War I, the USSR and Weimar Germany, had collaborated secretly under the provisions of the Treaty of Rapallo. Tukhachevsky and many other Soviet officers, including most of those executed along with him, had trained in Germany. Such ties had been terminated at Hitler's rise to power.

When Ustrialov referred to Hitler's *Drang nach Osten*, the cornerstone of his foreign policy since the beginning and enshrined in his credo *Mein Kampf*, Tukhachevsky replied that Poland, not the USSR, could satisfy Hitler's territorial ambitions. He referred to the Treaty of Riga (March 1921) in which Poland had acquired much of Ukraine and Belorussia at the expense of the newly-socialist Russian Republic.

To that treaty Tukhachevsky counterposed the Congress of Vienna at which in 1815 Russian imperial control over Poland had been established with a fig-leaf of Polish independence which was snuffed out by the Tsar in 1832. In effect Tukhachevsky seemed to be hinting that under a new political leadership the USSR could be a German ally once again and help to put an end to the Polish state.

To this Ustrialov objected in surprise that the socio-political differences between Germany and the USSR were "deeply

contradictory to one another.” Tukhachevsky's response was that “regimes develop and evolve.” But the only “evolution” he spoke of was of a change in the Soviet regime and Party, guided by “**realist politicians**” (*real'nye politiki*). According to Ustrialov Tukhachevsky said nothing about Nazi Germany's “evolving.”

Tukhachevsky then said that the “internal political program” of these “**realist politicians**” would flow from the “necessity to remove the sharpness of the contradictions between the Soviet state and the outside world.” Given what he had already said, however, it is clear Tukhachevsky meant the contradictions between Nazi Germany and the USSR, on the one hand, and the existence of the Comintern on the other. By the autumn of 1936 there were already serious and deepening contradictions between France and Germany. But all the capitalist countries were in agreement in their hostility to the Comintern.

The exact same term “realist politicians” (*real'nye politiki*) was used by Karl Radek in the Second Moscow Trial of January 23-30, 1937, in the same way that, in Ustrialov's account Tukhachevsky used it in speaking to Ustrialov in the autumn of 1936.

Radek:

Я сказал г. К., что ожидать уступок от нынешнего правительства – дело совершенно бесполезное, и что ..... правительство может рассчитывать на уступки “**реальных политиков** в СССР,” т. е. от блока, когда последний придет к власти.

Translated:

“I told Mr. K. that it was absolutely useless expecting any concessions from the present government, but that the ... government could count upon receiving concessions from the **realist politicians** in the U.S.S.R., i.e., from the bloc, when the latter came to power.

(1937 Trial 9)

Radek:

Это было в мае 1934 года. Осенью 1934 года, на одном дипломатическом приеме известный мне дипломатический представитель средневропейской державы присел ко мне и начал разговор. Он сказал: **“Наши руководители (он это сказал конкретнее) знают, что господин Троцкий стремится к сближению с Германией. Наш вождь спрашивает, что означает эта мысль господина Троцкого? Может быть, это мысль эмигранта, когда ему не спится? Кто стоит за этими мыслями?”**

Ясно было, что меня спрашивают об отношении блока. Я сказал ему, что **реальные политики** в СССР понимают значение германо-советского сближения и готовы пойти на уступки, необходимые для этого сближения. Этот представитель понял, что раз я говорил о **реальных политиках**, значит **есть в СССР реальные политики и нереальные политики; нереальные – это советское правительство, а реальные – это троцкистско-зиновьевский блок**. И понятен был смысл того, что я сказал: если блок придет к власти, он пойдет на уступки для сближения с вашим правительством и со страной, которую оно представляет.

Translated:

RADEK: This was in May 1934. In the autumn of 1934, at a diplomatic reception, a diplomatic representative of a Central European country who was known to me, sat down beside me and started a conversation. Well, he started this conversation in a manner that was not very stylish. He said (speaking German): “I feel I want to spew. . . . Every day I get German newspapers and

they go for your tooth and nail; and I get Soviet newspapers and you throw mud at Germany. What can one do under these circumstances?" He said: "**Our leaders**" (he said that more explicitly) "**know that Mr. Trotsky is striving for a rapprochement with Germany. Our leader wants to know, what does this idea of Mr. Trotsky's signify? Perhaps it is the idea of an émigré who sleeps badly? Who is behind these ideas?**"

It was clear that I was being asked about the attitude of the bloc. I could not suppose that this was an echo of any of Trotsky's articles, because I read everything that was written by Trotsky, watched what he wrote both in the American and in the French press; I was fully informed about what Trotsky wrote, and I knew that Trotsky had never advocated the idea of a rapprochement with Germany in the press. If this representative said that he knew Trotsky's views, that meant that this representative, while not, by virtue of his position, a man whom his leader treated confidentially, was consequently a representative who had been commissioned to ask me. Of course, his talk with me lasted only a couple of minutes; the atmosphere of a diplomatic reception is not suited for lengthy perorations. I had to make my decision literally in one second and give him an answer, and I told him that altercation between two countries, even if they represent (diametrically opposite social systems) is a fruitless matter, but that sole attention must not be paid to these newspaper altercations. I told him that **realist politicians** in the U.S.S.R. understand the significance of a German-Soviet rapprochement and are prepared to make the necessary concessions to achieve this rapprochement. This representative understood that since I was speaking about **realist politicians** it meant that **there were realist politicians and unrealistic politicians in**

**the U.S.S.R.: the unrealist politicians were the Soviet government, while the realist politicians were the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc.** And he also understood that what I meant was: if the bloc comes into power it will make concessions in order to bring about a rapprochement with your government and the country which it represents. (1937 Trial 108-109)<sup>6</sup>

Radek:

И через несколько месяцев, приблизительно в ноябре 1935 года, на одном из очередных дипломатических приемов подошел ко мне военный представитель этой страны...

Председательствующий: Не называйте ни фамилий, ни страны.

Радек: ...и начал жаловаться на полное изменение атмосферы между обеими странами. После первых слов он сказал, что во время господина Троцкого между обеими армиями обеих стран существовали лучшие отношения. **В дальнейшем он сказал, что Троцкий остался верен своим старым взглядам на необходимость советско-немецкой дружбы.** После ряда его таких дальнейших высказываний он начал напирать на меня, как на проводившего ранее раппальскую линию. Я ему на это ответил той же самой формулировкой, которой ответил на первый зондаж, что **реальные политики** в СССР знают значение советско-немецкой дружбы и готовы идти на уступки, необходимые для обеспечения этой дружбы. Он мне ответил, что надо было бы, наконец, когда-

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<sup>6</sup> The English transcript of the January 1937 Second Moscow Trial is much longer than the Russian transcript.

нибудь собраться, совместно поговорить подробно к конкретно о путях сближения.

Я сказал ему, что когда будет соответствующая обстановка, я охотно проведу с ним вечер. Этот второй разговор показал мне, что тут есть попытка перехвата тех отношений, которые начались между Троцким и соответственными кругами Германии, руками военных кругов, или же проверка реального содержания тех переговоров, которые велись. Быть может, дело шло также о проверке, знаем ли мы то, что конкретно предлагал Троцкий.

Translated:

RADEK: Several months later, approximately, November 1935, at one of the regular diplomatic receptions, the military representative of that country. . .

THE PRESIDENT: Do not mention his name or the country.

RADEK: ... approached me and began to complain about the complete change of atmosphere between the two countries. After the first few words he said that during Mr. Trotsky's time the relations between the armies of the two countries were better.

**He went on to say that Trotsky had remained true to his old opinion about the need for Soviet-German friendship.** After speaking in this strain for a little while longer he began to press me hard as one who had formerly pursued the Rappalo line. I replied to this by uttering the same formula which I had uttered when I was first sounded, namely, that the **realist politicians** of the U.S.S.R. appreciate the significance of Soviet-German friendship and are prepared to make the necessary concessions in order



to ensure this friendship. To this he replied that we ought at last to get together somehow and jointly discuss the details, definitely, about ways of reaching a rapprochement.

I told him that when the circumstances permitted I would be glad to spend an evening with him. This second conversation revealed to me that there was an attempt on the part of military circles to take over the connections which Trotsky had established with certain circles in Germany, or that it was an attempt to verify the real content of the negotiations that were being conducted. Perhaps, also, it was an attempt to ascertain whether we knew definitely what Trotsky had proposed. (1937 Trial 444-445)

In his summing-up statement to the court Prosecutor Vyshinsky referred repeatedly and sarcastically to Radek's use of the term "realist politicians." (1937 Trial 480).

Ustrialov concludes this part of the interrogation with the remark that he realized this was the plan of the "Rightist Party opposition, the Bukharin-Rykov group." Evidently enough information about the political program of the Rights had been published by this time, or at least bruited about in conversations, perhaps at *Izvestiia* of which Bukharin was the editor and where Ustrialov himself was to publish an article in December 1936. The program of the bloc was shared by both the Trotskyists and the Rights. Ustrialov would have naturally been drawn more to the Rights.

If there were any reason to think that Ustrialov's confession were an NKVD "fabrication" we might attribute the use of the term "realist politicians" to an NKVD attempt to falsely link the confession, and thereby the Rights, with the Trotskyists of the Second Moscow Trial of January 1937, which had taken place only a few months earlier. But, as we have seen, there is no reason to think that Ustrialov's confession is a fabrication.

Therefore the recurrence of the term “realist politicians” represents what Radek meant by it: a coded reference to the bloc of Trotskyists, Zinovievists, Rights, and other oppositionists that, in collaboration with the Tukhachevsky group and Germany, planned to overthrow the Stalin leadership.

## Part Two. Late December 1936: Ustrialov Meets with a Japanese Agent

Ustrialov:

Однако вскоре я узнал гораздо более конкретные вещи, заставившие меня думать о возможно кардинальных изменениях в руководстве ВКП(б) и всей проводимой Советским государством политики: я узнал о непосредственной связи между группой Бухарина-Рыкова и Тухачевского.

ВОПРОС: От кого вы это узнали?

ОТВЕТ: Об этом мне при встрече в конце 1936 года рассказал один японец.

ВОПРОС: О каком японце идет речь? Где вы с ним встретились?

ОТВЕТ: Вскоре после напечатания моей статьи «Самопознание социализма» в декабрьском номере (1936 год) «Известий» мне позвонило по телефону неизвестное лицо с просьбой о свидании, передав при этом привет от «харбинских знакомых». На мой вопрос, с кем я имею честь говорить, последовал ответ: «Вы меня не знаете, поэтому фамилия вам безразлична, однако мне крайне необходимо с вами лично повидаться и передать вам привет от «харбинских друзей».”

После некоторых колебаний я изъявил согласие на встречу, и мы договорились встретиться в тот же день около десяти часов вечера в Лосинке,

неподалеку от Института НКПС. В назначенное время я пришел в условленное место. В начале одиннадцатого к институту подошла машина. Из нее вышел окутанный в шубу человек, по внешности японец. Подойдя ко мне и назвав меня по фамилии, японец отрекомендовался фамилией Накамура, заявил, что он является корреспондентом одной из токийских газет, что он следует транзитом из Японии в Европу и задержался на несколько дней в Москве.

Накамура передал мне привет от Танака и выразил пожелание обменяться со мной мнениями по некоторым интересующим его вопросам.

<с.254>

Весь разговор велся между нами на французском языке.

ВОПРОС: Обстоятельства встречи с Накамура, как вы их излагаете, с несомненностью свидетельствует о том, что подобная встреча заранее вами обусловлена при отъезде из Харбина в СССР, иначе совершенно непонятны мотивы, побудившие вас встретиться в Москве с совершенно неизвестным вам японцем. Признаете ли вы это?

ОТВЕТ: Вы совершенно правы, я вовсе не собираюсь скрывать, что еще в конце 1934 года Танака при разговоре со мной в Харбине предупредил меня, что в случае необходимости получения от меня консульский по тому или иному вопросу, связанному с так называемой русской проблемой, японцы попытаются искать возможностей для установления со мной связей в

Москве. Я утверждаю, однако, что никакой окончательной договоренности об обстоятельствах этой встречи между нами установлено не было.

ВОПРОС: Вернемся к обстоятельствам вашей встречи с Накамура. Где и о чем вы с ним разговаривали?

ОТВЕТ: Накамура пригласил меня к себе в автомобиль и в течение примерно полутора часов разъезжал со мной между Москвой и Лосинкой, и все время беседовали. Вначале он говорил о моей статье в «Известиях», спросил, давно ли я сотрудничаю в этой газете и знаком ли я с Бухариным и его друзьями, на что я ответил отрицательно. Он интересовался далее, в каких кругах я вращаюсь, и снова говорил о среде бухаринско-рыковской группы, называя ее группой **реальных политиков**, гораздо более дальновидных и более снабженных социальной опорой, нежели недавно провалившаяся группа Зиновьева -Каменева. На мою реплику, что теперь едва ли можно серьезно говорить о роли бухаринско-рыковской группы, он заметил, что эта группа, по его мнению, вовсе не так слаба, как кажется, и что у нее имеются немало явных и тайных сторонников в различных звеньях советского аппарата. Затем он спросил меня о настроениях советской интеллигенции и о собственной моей оценке политического положения. Я вкратце сообщил ему свою точку зрения.

ВОПРОС: Что вы сообщили Накамура?

ОТВЕТ: Я изложил Накамура свою оценку существующего в стране положения под уклоном зрения моей теории «бонапартизма,” — я говорил,

что революция неуклонно устремляется по бонапартистскому пути, развивается этот бонапартизм особого порядка — прежде всего как принцип безграничного единовластия вождя.

Затем я обратил внимание Накамура на такие мероприятия правительства, как установление званий, орденов, введение института маршалов, восстановление казачества и т.д. ... Появление «знатных людей» как бы подчеркивало создание новой знати, т.е. опять-таки наводит мысль на аналогию с эпохой Бонапарта. Я говорил, что казнь зиновьевцев — есть первое в истории русской революции применение якобинских методов борьбы с революционерами: мокрая гильотина — вместо сухой. В таком же духе я дал оценку и другим событиям внутренней жизни страны.

ВОПРОС: Как реагировал Накамура на изложенные вами вопросы?

ОТВЕТ: Как бы в ответ на эти «бонапартистские нотки» моих замечаний, мой собеседник неожиданно для меня перешел к теме Красной армии и отметил, что, по его сведениям, у правых есть сторонники и в ее среде, точнее, в среде ее верхушки. Правые вовсе не так бессильны, как я полагаю. Японцы имеют насчет этого достоверную информацию не только собственную, но и почерпнутую из союзного им источника, столь же, как они, заинтересованного в борьбе с Коминтерном.<sup>7</sup> Есть основание утверждать, что надежды и планы правых вовсе не беспочвенны. И чтобы не быть голословным, он даже может

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<sup>7</sup> Presumably Germany.

назвать одно имя. представляющее в этом отношении достаточно веским: по его данным, «господин Тухачевский» связан тесными политическими симпатиями с группой правых коммунистов. А Тухачевский — имя импонирующее: его хорошо знают политические круги всех иностранных государств, и еще русская эмиграция прочила его в «русские Наполеоны». Вместе с тем, как один из маршалов, он популярен в СССР.

На мой вопрос моему собеседнику, как же мыслит он политическую программу такого право-военного блока, он развил мне ряд соображений, напоминающих изложенные выше суждения Танака, в 1934 году.

В случае политического успеха, правительство бухаринско-рыковской группы, в корне изменило бы курс советской политики в сторону сближения с пожеланиями иностранных государств. В частности, Япония ожидает от этого правительства прекращения работы Коминтерна в Китае и предоставления Японии полной свободы рук в Китае. Вместе с тем Япония рассчитывает на значительное расширение различных концессий в пределах Советского Дальнего Востока, а возможно, даже и на полюбовное соглашение о продаже ей на приемлемых условиях северной части Сахалина. Все это радикально смягчит нынешнюю напряженность отношений между Японией и СССР.

На мой вопрос о позиции такого правительства в сфере европейской внешней политики **Накамура ответил, что должно произойти резкое улучшение советско-германских отношений.** Изменение режима монополии внешней торговли вызовет оживление торговых связей между

обеими странами, германскую торговую экспансию в СССР. Территориально-политические трудности могут быть разрешены в значительной мере за счет Польши. Свертывание деятельности Коминтерна идет навстречу основным установкам Гитлера. Словом, здесь можно ожидать решительной перемены всей современной международной ситуации и установления мирового равновесия на новых основах. Советский Союз прочно войдет в общество «нормальных» государств, ведущих политику здорового национального эгоизма.

Прощаясь со мной, японец дал мне понять, что был бы весьма заинтересован услышать от меня более подробные и конкретные соображения по затронутым (в нашей беседе) вопросам. **Он выразил надежду, что на почве сотрудничества моего в «Известиях» мне удастся повидать Бухарина либо еще кого-либо из правых коммунистов, а также при их посредстве встретиться с Тухачевским.** Он добавил, что через несколько месяцев на обратном пути из Европы в Японию он хотел бы снова встретиться со мной. На этом наша беседа, продолжавшаяся около полутора часов, закончилась.

ВОПРОС: После вашей встречи с Накамура вы пытались связаться с Бухариным и его окружением?

<с.255>

ОТВЕТ: Нет, я не связывался. Встреча с Накамура состоялась в конце декабря, а в середине января 1937 года уже было известно о предстоящем

процессе параллельного центра, а еще спустя месяц прошел слух об аресте Бухарина и Рыкова. Все последние события заставили меня занимать выжидательную позицию, и на этом меня застал арест.<sup>8</sup>

Translated:

[USTRIALOV]: However, soon I learned much more concrete things that forced me to think about possible cardinal changes in the leadership of the VKP(b) and of the whole political line of the Soviet government, and learned about the direct connection between the Bukharin-Rykov group and Tukhachevsky.

QUESTION: From whom did you learn this?

ANSWER: A Japanese man told me about this when I met him at the end of 1936.

QUESTION: What Japanese man? Where did you meet with him?

ANSWER: Soon after my article "The Self-Awareness of Socialism" appeared in the December issue (1936) of *Izvestia* a person unknown to me called me on the telephone and asked for a meeting, giving me greetings from "Harbin acquaintances." When I asked to whom I had the honor of speaking the latter answered: "You do not know me, so my name is irrelevant, but it is essential for me that I meet personally with you and transmit to you greetings from 'Harbin friends.'"

After some hesitation I consented to a meeting and we agreed to meet each other the same day around ten o'clock in the evening in the Losinka [probably the

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<sup>8</sup> Bysriantseva, "Ustremlenie..." 252-254.



park of that name, GF], not far from the Institute of the People's Commissariat of Transportation. At the agreed-upon time I arrived at that place. Soon after 10 p.m. an automobile approached the Institute. Out of it stepped a man, Japanese in appearance, wrapped in a fur coat. The Japanese man approached me, called me by my name, said his name was Nakamura, and stated that he was a correspondent of one of the Tokyo newspapers and that he was in transit from Japan to Europe and was staying for several days in Moscow.

Nakamura gave me greetings from Tanaka and expressed the desire to exchange views with me about a few questions that interested him.

<p. 254>

Our whole conversation was carried on in French.

QUESTION: The circumstances of your meeting with Nakamura, as you describe them, unquestionably show that this meeting had been arranged by the two of you when you left Harbin for the USSR. Otherwise the motives that prompted you to meet in Moscow with a Japanese man completely unknown to you are incomprehensible. Do you admit this?

ANSWER: You are quite correct, I do not at all intend to conceal the fact that at the end of 1934 Tanaka, during a conversation with me in Harbin, warned me that if it became essential to receive a consultation from me about one or another question connected with the so-called Russian problem, the Japanese would try to seek the possibility of establishing contact with me in Moscow. I assert, however, that no final agreement about the circumstances of this meeting between us had been agreed upon.

QUESTION: Let us return to the circumstances of your meeting with Nakamura. Where and about what did you talk with him?

ANSWER: Nakamura invited me to sit in his automobile and for about an hour and a half we drove between Moscow and the Losinka, talking all the while. At the outset he spoke about my article in "Izvestiia," asked whether I had worked at this newspaper long and whether I was acquainted with Bukharin and his friends. To this I answered in the negative. He was further interested to learn what circles I frequented, **and again spoke of the milieu of the Bukharin-Rykov group, which he called the group of *realist politicians*, much more far-sighted and possessing more social support than the Zinoviev-Kamenev group that had recently failed.** To my reply that now it was scarcely possible to speak seriously about any role for the Bukharin-Rykov group, **he noted that this group, in his opinion, was not at all as weak as it seemed, and that it had many overt and secret supporters in the different links of the Soviet apparatus.** Then he asked me about the mood of the Soviet intelligentsia and about my own evaluation of the political situation. I briefly informed him about my point of view.

QUESTION: What did you tell Nakamura?

ANSWER: I set forth to Nakamura my evaluation of the situation in the country from the viewpoint of my theory of "Bonapartism." I said that the revolution was steadily moving along a Bonapartist road, that this Bonapartism of a certain sort was developing – above all as the principle of the limitless personal power of the leader.

Then I turned Nakamura's attention to such measures of the government as the establishment of titles,

awards, the institution of the rank of Marshal, the reestablishment of the Cossacks, etc. ... The emergence of "notable people" as it were emphasized the creation of a new aristocracy, that is, it once again reminded one of the analogy to the Bonaparte epoch. I said that the execution of the Zinovievites was the first example in the history of the Russian Revolution of the acceptance of the methods of the Jacobins in struggle with revolutionaries: the "wet" guillotine instead of the "dry." In this spirit I gave him my evaluation about other events of the internal life of the country.

QUESTION: How did Nakamura react to the questions you laid out?

ANSWER: As though in answer to these "Bonapartist notes" of my remarks my interlocutor, unexpectedly for me, began to speak on the topic of **the Red Army and mentioned that, according to his information, the Rights had supports in its ranks also, more precisely in the milieu of its high command. That the Rights were not as powerless as I believed. The Japanese had reliable information about this, not only their own, but also that obtained from an allied source, just as interested as they were in the struggle against the Comintern.**<sup>9</sup> There were reasons to affirm that the hopes and plans of the Rights were not at all baseless. And, so as not to be too vague, he could even name one name that was, in relation to this, rather weighty. **According to his information "Mister Tukhachevsky" was connected by close political sympathies with the group of the Right communists. And Tukhachevsky was an impressive name, well known to political**

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<sup>9</sup> Presumably Germany.

**circles of all foreign governments**, and that even the Russian emigration predicted that he was a "Russian Napoleon." Moreover, as one of the marshals, he was popular in the USSR.

To my question how he imagined the political program of such a Right-Military bloc he developed to me a series of conceptions that reminded me of the judgments expressed by Tanaka in 1934.

**In the event of political success, the government of the Bukharin-Rykov group would fundamentally change the course of Soviet politics towards the side of coming closer to the desires of foreign states.** In particular, Japan expected that this government would stop the work of the Comintern in China and would give Japan full freedom of action in China. At the same time Japan was expecting the significant expansion of various concessions in the Soviet Far East, possibly even an amicable agreement about the sale to it on acceptable terms of the northern part of Sakhalin. All this would radically lessen the current tense relations between Japan and the USSR.

To my question about the position of such a government in the sphere of European foreign policy Nakamura answered that **a sharp improvement in Soviet-German relations would take place.** A change in the system of the monopoly of foreign trade would reinvigorate commercial ties between both countries and German commercial expansion in the USSR. Territorial-political difficulties could be decided, to a significant extent, at the expense of Poland. The decommissioning of the activities of the Comintern would meet Hitler's basic conditions. In a word, here we could expect a decisive turn in the whole contemporary international situation and the establishment of a peaceful equilibrium on a new

basis. The Soviet Union would firmly enter the society of "normal" states that carry out the politics of healthy national egoism.

As he said goodbye to me the Japanese man gave me to understand that he would be very interested to hear more detailed and concrete thoughts from me about the questions touched upon in our talk. **He expressed the hope that on the basis of my collaboration on "Izvestiia" I would succeed in seeing Bukharin or some other Right communists, and also with their help meet with Tukhachevsky.** He added that in a few months on his way back from Europe to Japan he would like to meet with me again. On this note our conversation, which had lasted about one and a half hours, ended.

QUESTION: After your talk with Nakamura did you try to get in touch with Bukharin and his circle?

<p. 255>

ANSWER: No, I did not. The meeting with Nakamura took place at the end of December [1936], and in the middle of January 1937 we already knew about the upcoming trial of the parallel center [the Second Moscow Trial of January 23-30, 1937], and a month after that there came the rumor of the arrests of Bukharin and Rykov. All these events impelled me to take a position of waiting, and during this period came my arrest.

Ustrialov believed there was a connection between his publication of a philosophical article in *Izvestiia* in December 1936 and his being contacted by a Japanese agent and subsequently meeting with him at the end of that month. At this time Bukharin was editor of *Izvestiia* and was publishing articles by well-known

former oppositionists. Ustrialov was a former leading member of the Kadet (Constitutional Democrat) Party, the main capitalist party at the time of the Revolution, and former minister in the White Russian government of Admiral Kolchak. He had returned to the USSR when the Soviet share in the Chinese-Eastern Railway had been sold to Japan in 1935.

Though by this time he had “accepted” the Soviet regime as a Russian patriot he was also known as a right-winger in politics, founder of the *Smenovekhist* movement of exile Russian intellectuals who believed that the Soviet regime would “evolve” into something less radical. In essence this was a political perspective that counted on the Russian Revolution’s evolving along similar lines to the French Revolution. Ustrialov saw in Stalin the “new Napoleon,” or “Caesarism,” as he put it.

Harbin, the city in Heilongjiang Province occupied by the Japanese from February 1932 was the largest settlement of White Russians in the world and teemed with agents and spies from all over the world.<sup>10</sup> Ustrialov lived there between 1920, when it was still an outpost of the White Russian military resistance to the Bolshevik Revolution, and 1935, when Russian employees of the railroad were permitted to repatriate to the USSR if they wished, as Ustrialov chose to do.

In the course of this second part of his interrogation Ustrialov admitted that he had been contacted by Tanaka, whom Bystriantseva identifies as a member of the Upper House of the Japanese Diet (Parliament), an expert on Russian affairs, and as such, an agent of the Japanese government. Ustrialov had met Tanaka as early as 1926.

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<sup>10</sup> “Harbin was a nest of the world’s intelligence services and secret operations of the 1930s.” («Харбин — это гнездо мировых разведок и тайных операций 30-х годов.») Mikhail Vishliakov, “Faces of the Transbaikals.” Михаил Вишняков, «Лики Забайкалья». *Сибирские Огни: Литературно-Художественный Журнал*. № 2 (2004). [http://www.hrono.ru/text/2004/vish\\_0204.html](http://www.hrono.ru/text/2004/vish_0204.html)

Tanaka had told Ustrialov in 1934 in Harbin that the Japanese government would try to reestablish contact with him in Moscow in order to ask his advice "on the so-called Russian problem." Nakamura, the Japanese correspondent and, obviously, intelligence agent who contacted Ustrialov and met with him in late December 1936, gave an introduction - "greetings" - from "Harbin friends" and, when they met in person, from Tanaka. "Harbin friends" would have either been anti-Soviet Russian émigrés who had refused to repatriate or the Japanese themselves.

Ustrialov agreed to meet him in a clandestine manner. Ustrialov also did not volunteer this information, but only divulged it when his interrogator suggested that he knew this already. In the eyes of the NKVD and prosecution this would have been another mark against him. Citizens were supposed to report to the proper authorities any attempts by suspected agents of foreign powers to meet with them. The ninety-minute talk also took place in Tanaka's automobile. This was obviously an attempt at secrecy too.

Failure to contact the Soviet government at this point to inform them of the attempt by an obvious Japanese agent to contact him would certainly have put Ustrialov outside the law. The Soviet government would have regarded this as an agreement by Ustrialov to be a Japanese spy. Ustrialov did not notify the government, but was evidently found out anyway. He was in fact convicted and executed in September 1937 for espionage for Japan.

Nakamura asked about Bukharin "and his friends," showed much interest in them, and called them "realist politicians, much more far-sighted and having more social support than the Zinoviev-Kamenev group that had recently failed." He called them "not at all as weak as it seemed" and said they had much open and secret support within different areas of the Soviet Party and apparatus.

Nakamura then revealed that support for the Right opposition existed in the highest echelons of the Red Army, saying that the

Japanese knew this not only from their own information but from "another anti-Comintern ally." This was certainly Germany. The "anti-Comintern pact" between Germany and Japan had been formed in November 1936 and no other countries had joined it by July 1937 (Mussolini's Italy did not join it until November 1937). We have a great deal of evidence of collaboration of Tukhachevsky et al. with Germany. One small bit of it, the Mastny-Benes note, is discussed briefly earlier in the present volume.

## The Program of the Rights

Nakamura named Tukhachevsky as one of those who were very sympathetic to the Rights. He outlined the political program of the Rights in the same way Tanaka had done in 1934. According to Nakamura the Bukharin-Rykov group would, if they came to power, sharply change Soviet policy in the following ways.

- \* Halt Comintern work in China. That would mean stopping all support for the Chinese Communist Party of Mao Tse Tung.
- \* Let Japan have "a free hand" in China, to make it a Japanese colony.
- \* Give Japan "significant concessions" in the Soviet Far East, including perhaps selling back to Japan the northern part of Sakhalin Island.
- \* Effect a sharp improvement in Soviet-German relations.
- \* Expand trade with Germany and German markets in the USSR.
- \* Stop supporting the Comintern. This presumably meant in Axis and pro-German countries at least, unless it meant "shutting it down entirely."
- \* Enter into some kind of alliance with Germany against Poland.

This outline of the program of the Rights corresponds closely to that given briefly by Bukharin in his first confession of June 2,



1937, and that emerges from the testimony of Bukharin, Rykov, and the other defendants at the March 1938 Moscow Trial. It would mean that the USSR would then, in Ustrialov's words, "enter the society of 'normal' states," promoting national, rather than internationalist and class, interests.

Nakamura expressed the wish that Ustrialov should meet with Bukharin or other Rightists and hopefully, with their help, with Tukhachevsky again. This confirms that the Japanese government believed the possibilities for a Rightist – Military seizure of power was still very much alive in December 1936. And this is consistent with the information surrounding the Trauttmansdorff-Mastny talks only a few weeks later in early 1937. We have much evidence that at this time Hitler was still hoping the Rights and military could still take power.<sup>11</sup>

## Bystriantseva's Analysis

In her introduction to the text of this interrogation Bystriantseva, an expert on Ustrialov's life and works, admits that she is unable to establish that the remarks in it were forced upon Ustrialov by the interrogators. Despite whatever doubts she has, she goes on to take the interview seriously anyway and, in her other remarks, assumes it does indeed express Ustrialov's own views.

She states:

Хочется подчеркнуть, казалось бы, общеизвестное, но слишком часто нарушаемое правило: анализ документа предполагает обязательное знание не только всей деятельности Н.В.Устрялова, но и его целостного мировоззрения. (246 col. 2)

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, our discussion of the Mastny-Benes note in a previous chapter.

Можно сказать, что данный протокол является последним разговором, беседой Устрялова с будущим поколением. (248 col. 2)

Translated:

I wish to emphasize a rule that it seems, should be generally understood but is frequently broken: the analysis of this document presupposes the obligatory knowledge not only of all of the activity of N.V. Ustrialov but also of his world-view as a whole.

It can be said that his transcript represents the final conversation, by Ustrialov with the generation of the future.

This argues strongly for the genuineness of Ustrialov's confessions in two ways. For one thing, how would an NKVD interrogator know Ustrialov's views so well that he could forge or "script" the transcript of an interrogation to sound genuine to an expert like Bystriantseva? For another, Bystriantseva herself is expert in Ustrialov's works and worldview. Yet she admits that she is unable to conclude the transcript of the interview with Tukhachevsky was faked.

Bystriantseva herself obviously believes that the interrogation was not falsified. She writes that she considers this interrogation Ustrialov's "last thoughts, his hopes, his words to the future." Her words are further evidence that the interrogation is genuine, and that the remarks attributed to Ustrialov in it were, in fact, his own.

But if the interrogation was not falsified in those parts of it where Ustrialov expresses his political and philosophical views, then this is additional strong evidence that the rest of the interrogation is genuine as well, including the sections that interest us.

Elsewhere in the article Bystriantseva notes that in the transcript Ustrialov's friend, the jurist Nikolai Pavlovich Sheremet'evskii, is

called Nikolai Borisovich – an error that the real Ustrialov could not possibly make in the case of a friend. She is undoubtedly right that Ustrialov would not have made such a mistake. But this is an error that a typist working from a shorthand transcript could easily make. It proves nothing in itself.

Ustrialov's cousin Ekaterina Grigor'evna Shaposhnikova did in fact tutor Tukhachevsky's daughter in the Russian language, as Ustrialov states elsewhere in the transcript. Bystriantseva notes that Shaposhnikova's son's denial that the meeting took place has no significance.

Ustrialov states that his cousin Shaposhnikova was "an elderly woman of about fifty" and completely apolitical. As Bystriantseva suggests, Ustrialov undoubtedly said this to keep suspicion away from her. In fact Shaposhnikova was born in 1896 and would have been no more than forty-one at the time of the meeting with Tukhachevsky. She did in fact escape arrest and lived until 1983. In any event, this detail seems to be genuine.

Bystriantseva also published notes on the "rehabilitation hearings" held in Ustrialov's case in 1988. This was a time when rehabilitations of the "victims of Stalinism" were proceeding at a high rate and in large numbers. But the military prosecutor failed to recommend Ustrialov's rehabilitation based on the evidence he had. The documents reveal that a previous rehabilitation investigation in 1955-56 also failed to reach any conclusive results, and left a number of unanswered questions. This earlier study confirmed that Ustrialov had been a leading member of the Kadet Party and had been personally singled out by Lenin as an enemy of the Soviet regime. Ustrialov had certainly been an outspoken opponent of the Soviet regime in this period.

Ustrialov confessed as well to long contact with Japanese intelligence. In effect this made him a Japanese agent. The Khrushchev- and early Gorbachev-era rehabilitation commissions must have considered this in their decisions not to rehabilitate him. Although Ustrialov was at length rehabilitated on October 17,

1989, the materials Bystriantseva cites suggest that these points were not cleared up even at that time. By the late Gorbachev period almost every application for rehabilitation was being accepted.

The earlier rehabilitation study of Ustrialov's criminal case file reveals that Ustrialov confirmed his guilt at his trial, while it states that no other inculpatory materials were presented at the trial other than his own confessions in the preliminary investigation and again at his trial on September 14, 1937. We would expect that the indictment would state the grounds on which the suspicion of "counterrevolutionary activity" was based – that is, what circumstances had excited the interest of the NKVD and led to Ustrialov's arrest.

Ustrialov named a number of his friends among whom, he said, he had "set forth his counterrevolutionary views." Some of them were repressed between 1937 and 1940. But others were evidently not repressed in any way and lived into the '50s, '60s, '70s and even '80s.

Названные Устряловым (Устряловым ли?) фамилии не были тайной для органов (и мы считаем необходимым особо подчеркнуть, что большая часть из этих лиц не только не пострадала, но и продолжала работать, получая награды от советского правительства). (248 col. 1-2)

Translated:

The names named by Ustrialov – if it was he – were no secret to the "organs" (and we consider it essential to specially emphasize the fact that most of these persons not only were not repressed, but even continued to work and received awards from the Soviet government.)

This suggests that the names were not suggested by the interrogators in order to find a pretext to arrest and repress these

people. The only logical conclusion that remains is that Ustrialov did in fact name them himself.

Ustrialov's statement is consistent with Tukhachevsky's confessions; with the pre-trial confessions we have from Bukharin and Krestinsky; and with the testimony at the March 1938 Moscow trial. Both Tukhachevsky and Nakamura referred to the Rights, or Bukharin-Rykov group, as the "realist politicians." Radek said that he used the same term for the bloc of Rights and Trotskyists in his discussions with the German military attaché General K. (evidently German military attaché General Ernst Köstring).

In this context there seems little reason to doubt the genuineness of the Arao document, since it is obviously compatible with Nakamura's knowledge of Tukhachevsky's political orientation against the Soviet government and towards the Axis.<sup>12</sup> Ustrialov's confession also argues in favor of its being genuine.

## The Ustrialov Evidence and The Moscow Trials

The relevance of Ustrialov's confession to our evaluation of the Moscow Trials, including the accusations made there of Trotsky's collaboration with the Germans and Japanese, are very clear. The bloc of Rights and Trotskyites was accused of working with Tukhachevsky and his military co-conspirators and confessed to doing that.

In a previous chapter we have reproduced passages from the testimony of Rozengol'ts, Rykov, Grinko, Krestinsky, and Bukharin concerning the Tukhachevsky conspiracy. In them the defendants at the Third Moscow Trial admit collaboration with Tukhachevsky and his group of military men, and indicate that Trotsky was involved in this collaboration also.

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<sup>12</sup> We discuss the Arao document in an earlier chapter of this work.



Ustrialov's confession is thus strong evidence in support of the essentially reliable nature of Moscow Trials confessions as evidence, as well as of Trotsky's involvement in the conspiracy of the bloc – something we know from the Trotsky Archive is true in any case.

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During the Khrushchev and Gorbachev years "rehabilitations" were often justified by the statement that the only evidence against the defendant presented at trial was the defendant's own confessions. Works by anticommunist scholars repeat this charge as though it represented some kind of tyrannical practice.

This is deliberately misleading. In the American criminal justice system and, perhaps, others as well, the prosecution does not go to the expense and trouble of presenting a case, calling witnesses, and presenting evidence, if the defendant has pled guilty. A defendant's guilty plea does not imply that the prosecution did not have evidence and witnesses in case the defendant pled innocent. In the Soviet criminal justice system in the 1930s a defendant had to confirm his confessions of guilt (if he had made any) at trial. Many defendants confessed before trial, confirmed their confessions to the investigation before trial, and then refused to confirm them at trial. In those cases the prosecution presented the evidence it had. This happened in the case of Nikolai Ezhov in February 1940. Despite the fact that he refused to confirm his many confessions at trial Ezhov was convicted on the testimony of others who testified against him.

# Chapter 12. Conclusion – The Moscow Trials As Evidence

## Moscow Trial Defendants Who Lied

We can establish that some of the Moscow Trial defendants lied deliberately to the court.

A few words of caution are needed lest the reader mistakenly conclude: "If a witness tells a lie once, he must be lying all the time." Of course this is not so. The fact that someone has made *one* verifiably false statement does not in the least mean that *all* his or her statements must be false. Likewise, someone who had made a verifiably *true* statement does not necessarily tell the truth all the time. Each statement must be checked. Historians should verify, not "believe."

The fact that in example after example we have shown that Trotsky lied while defendants at the first two Moscow Trials told the truth does not mean that *all* the testimony and accusations in the Moscow Trials were true. Verifiable falsehoods can be found in them – but not, as is commonly believed, in the form of false accusations by the prosecution or false confessions of guilt by innocent defendants. Rather the falsehoods we can now demonstrate were told by guilty defendants who continued to deceive the prosecution and court.

## Sokol'nikov

For example, we can now confirm that the following statement made by Sokol'nikov in his final statement at trial, is false:

I can add nothing to the information and the evaluations which were here given by the members of the centre – Pyatakov and Radek. I think that these evaluations have been sufficiently frank, and I fully

share them. But I cannot add anything of my own, because **I was not in direct communication with Trotsky, I was not directly connected with him,** and received information through third persons. (1937 Trial 555)

Getty found a certified mail receipt of a letter to Sokol'nikov in London that Trotsky mailed sometime during 1932. The receipt is strong evidence that Sokol'nikov did receive the letter. Assuming the letter reached him – a similar letter did reach Radek – it follows that Sokol'nikov falsely denied having been in contact with Trotsky in 1932 although Radek admitted he had received Trotsky's letter in the same year.

We don't know why Sokol'nikov did this. Possibly Sokol'nikov believed that direct contact with Trotsky would be considered a more serious crime.

## Radek

Some Moscow Trial defendants withheld more substantive matters from the prosecution. During the first part of his testimony Radek mentioned the name of Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky (105). Later Vyshinsky asked Radek why he had done so. Radek replied "Of course, Tukhachevsky had no idea either of Putna's role or of my criminal role," adding

I say that I never had and could not have had any dealings with Tukhachevsky connected with counter-revolutionary activities, because I knew Tukhachevsky's attitude to the Party and the government to be that of an absolutely devoted man. (146)

These passages in which Tukhachevsky's name is mentioned are omitted from the published Russian-language transcript, which is less than half the length of the English transcript. We don't know why. It is possible that the much shorter Russian transcript was



published soon after the trial while the fuller English version was published later in the year after Tukhachevsky and other top military leaders had been arrested, tried, and convicted of espionage and treason in May-June 1937.

Radek must have known about Tukhachevsky's conspiracy. Bukharin knew about it, and he was closely in touch with Radek. Maybe Radek was still hoping in January 1937 that Tukhachevsky and the other military men would be successful in overthrowing the Stalin regime. Even Bukharin waited to mention Tukhachevsky's participation in the conspiracy until June 2, 1937, a week after Tukhachevsky had been arrested and had begun to confess.

Similarly, Bukharin concealed the involvement of Commissar of the NKVD Nikolai Ezhov with the conspiracy. We know that Bukharin knew of Ezhov's role by 1935 at the latest. In his first pretrial confession, again at his trial, and finally in his two appeals to the Soviet Supreme Court Bukharin claimed that he had completely "disarmed," confessed everything he knew. He said the same thing in his letter of December 10, 1937, to Stalin in which he retracted all his previous confessions, and whose content he then later retracted in turn. Perhaps Bukharin too was still hoping that Ezhov would be successful where Tukhachevsky and his own bloc of Rights and Trotskyists had failed.

If Bukharin had named Ezhov as a co-conspirator the Soviet government could have dismissed him from his post as Commissar of Internal Affairs – head of the NKVD – as much as 18 months before he was finally induced to resign in November 1938. The hundreds of thousands of murders of innocent Soviet citizens carried out under Ezhov's leadership in 1937-1938, often called the *Ezhovshchina* or "Great Terror," could have been greatly reduced in number and perhaps prevented altogether.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Grover Furr and Vladimir L. Bobrov, "Verdikt: Vinioven" [Verdict: Guilty]. In 1937. *Pravosudie Stalina. Obzhalovaniui ne podlezhit!* Moscow: Eksmo-Algoritm, 2010, 13-63.

## Zinoviev and Kamenev

Zinoviev and Kamenev knew about NKVD Commissar Iagoda's involvement in the conspiracy of Rightists but did not reveal that fact before or at their August 1936 trial. We know this now because in 1997 eight pretrial interrogations of Iagoda were published in Russia in the provincial city of Kazan' in a tiny press run of only 200 copies. In 2004 a semi-official volume of documents published by the right-wing anticommunist "Memorial" organization also published one of these interrogations, making it clear that they are genuine.

Iagoda testified as follows:

По отношению к Зиновьеву и Каменеву у меня была двойственная политика.

Я не мог допустить, чтобы следствие по их делу далеко зашло. Я боялся их откровенных показаний. Они могли бы выдать весь заговор....

Наряду с этим положение Зиновьева и Каменева, осужденных и находящихся в изоляторе, все время меня беспокоило. А вдруг они там что-либо надумают, надоест им сидеть и они разразятся полными и откровенными показаниями о заговоре, о центре, о моей роли (**Каменев, как участник общего центра заговора, несомненно знал обо мне и о том, что я являюсь участником заговора**). Я говорю, что это обстоятельство все время меня тревожило. Правда, я принял все меры к тому, чтобы создать Зиновьеву и Каменеву наиболее благоприятные условия в тюрьме: книги, бумагу, питание, прогулки - все это они получали без ограничения. Но чем черт не шутит? Они были опасными свидетелями.

Поэтому, докладывая дело в ЦК, я, чтобы покончить с ними, предлагал Зиновьева и Каменева расстрелять.

Это не прошло потому, что данных для расстрела действительно не было.

... Летом 1936 г. из политизоляторов в Москву для привлечения к следствию по делу центра троцкистско-зиновьевского блока были доставлены Зиновьев и Каменев. Мне, как я уже говорил, нужно было с ними покончить: они все равно были уже провалены, третий раз привлекались, и я очень беспокоился, чтобы они где-нибудь на следствии не болтнули лишнего. Поэтому я счел необходимым поговорить с ними. Ясно, что ни на допросах, ни вызывать их в кабинет для разговора я не мог. Поэтому я стал практиковать обход некоторых камер арестованных во внутренней тюрьме. Почти во все камеры я заходил вместе с начальником тюрьмы Поповым. К <с. 199:> Зиновьеву и Каменеву (в отдельности к каждому) я тоже зашел, предупредив Попова, чтобы он остался за дверью.

За время 5-10 минут я успел предупредить Зиновьева и Каменева о том, кто арестован, какие имеются показания. Заявил им, что никаких данных о других центрах, принимавших участие в заговоре, тем более об общем центре, следствие не знает.

"Не все еще потеряно, ничего не выдавайте сами. Центр заговора действует. Вне зависимости от приговора суда вы вернетесь ко мне," - говорил я им. И Зиновьев и Каменев на следствии и на суде, как вы знаете, выполнили мои указания. А после

приговора они были расстреляны. Это было в августе 1936 г.

Translated:

In relation to Zinoviev and Kamenev my policy was twofold. I could not permit the investigation of their case to go too far. **I was afraid of any frank confessions from them. They could give up the whole conspiracy. ...**

At the same time I was still troubled by the situation of Zinoviev and Kamenev who had been convicted and were in prison. Lest, suddenly, they get to thinking too much, get tired of sitting in prison, and suddenly burst out with full and frank confessions about the conspiracy, about the center, about my role (**Kamenev, as a participant in the general center of the conspiracy, unquestionably knew about me and about the fact that I was a participant in the conspiracy**). I say that this situation was troubling me all the time. True, I took all means to obtain for Zinoviev and Kamenev the most agreeable conditions in prison: books, paper, food, walks – all this they received without limit. But what the devil! They were dangerous witnesses. Therefore when I reported on this case to the Central Committee, in order to be finished with them, I proposed that Zinoviev and Kamenev be shot. This was not accepted because the facts necessary for their execution [to convict them of a capital crime – GF] really did not exist.

... In the summer of 1936 Zinoviev and Kamenev were sent from the political prisons to Moscow in order to be brought to trial in the case of the Trotskyist-Zinovievite bloc. As I have already said, I needed to finish them. They were already doomed, about to be tried for the third time; and I was very worried lest at

some point in the investigation they let drop something they should not. Therefore I began to make rounds of some of the cells of arrested suspects in the inner prison. I dropped in to almost all the cells together with Popov, the chief of the prison. I also dropped in on Zinoviev and Kamenev (separately on each of them), after telling Popov to remain outside.

In the space of 5 – 10 minutes I succeeded in informing Zinoviev and Kamenev about who had been arrested and what kind of confessions they had made. I told them that the investigation did not know any facts about the other centers that were taking part in the conspiracy, much less about the general center. **“Everything is not lost, do not give up anything yourselves. The conspiratorial center is still functioning. No matter what sentence the court hands down you will return to me,”** I told them. **And Zinoviev and Kamenev, as you know, carried out my instructions during the investigation and at the trial. And after their sentencing they were shot. This was in August 1936.** (Genrikh Iagoda 192; 198-9)

Iagoda rushed Kamenev and Zinoviev to execution before they could expose yet more of the conspiracy.

It appears that Nikolai Bukharin felt the same way:

We now have some of the letters that Bukharin wrote to Party leaders after the Zinov'ev-Kamenev trial. In his letter of August 27, 1936 to Stalin, Bukharin wrote:

Excellent that these scoundrels have been executed; the air became immediately cleaner.

In a letter to Voroshilov of a few days later, September 1, 1936, Bukharin calls Kamenev “cynic and murderer,” “most loathsome of men,” “human

carrion.” It had been Kamenev who at the August 1936 Moscow Trial implicated Bukharin as one of the leaders of the Rights as late as 1934, something Bukharin loudly denied. Bukharin added that he was “fearfully glad” (*strashno rad*) that “the dogs” – he means Zinov’ev and Kamenev – “have been shot.”

Bukharin’s words have the sound of someone who “doth protest too much.” Sure enough, in these letters Bukharin is trying hard to convince Stalin and others that what Zinov’ev and Kamenev said about him at their 1936 Trial was false. In fact, it was anything but!<sup>2</sup>

From other similar events Stalin concluded that the Oppositionists had an agreement to kill any of their number who named names. In reply to a remark by Bukharin Stalin explained this at the December 1936 Central Committee Plenum.

А что же теперь оказалось, вы поглядите! После этого мы человек 50, по крайней мере, опросили. Ведь они все нутро Пятакова выворотили. Это же чудовищный человек оказался! Почему он шел на то, чтобы выступить общественным обвинителем? Почему он шел на то, чтобы самому расстреливать своих товарищей? Оказывается, у них правило такое: ежели твой единомышленник-троцкист арестован и стал выдавать людей, его надо уничтожить. Вы видите, какая адская штука получается. Верь после этого в искренность бывших оппозиционеров! Нельзя верить на слово бывшим оппозиционерам даже тогда, когда они берутся собственноручно расстрелять своих друзей.

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<sup>2</sup> Furr, Grover and Vladimir L. Bobrov. “Stephen Cohen’s Biography of Bukharin: A Study in the Falsehood of Khrushchev-Era ‘Revelations.’” In *Cultural Logic* 2010. At <http://clogic.eserver.org/2010/Furr.pdf>

Translated:

But as for how things have turned out, you can see yourself! After that we questioned about 50 people, at least. They really turned Piatakov inside out. It turns out that he's a monster of a person! So why did he agree to be the public prosecutor? Why did he agree to shoot his comrades himself? It turns out that they have a rule like this: If your fellow Trotskyist is arrested and has begun to give up the names of others, he must be destroyed. You can see what kind of hellish joke this comes to. Believe after this in the sincerity of former oppositionists! We can't take former oppositionists at their word even when they volunteer to shoot their friends with their own hands. (*Voprosy Istorii* 1, 1995, pp. 9-10.)<sup>3</sup>

## Bukharin, Iagoda and others

Like Bukharin, Iagoda certainly knew about Ezhov's participation in the conspiracy as well, and like Bukharin he did not tell "the whole truth" at his trial.<sup>4</sup> In another chapter we have quoted the remarks by Mikhail Frinovsky in which he states that Bukharin, Iagoda, Bulanov, and perhaps others knew about Ezhov's conspiracy and did not reveal it.

In the "mercury affair" (*rtutnoe delo*), which we mentioned in Chapter 1, Ezhov told Bulanov to lie in order to build up his own, Ezhov's, credibility. It was discovered after Ezhov's arrest.

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<sup>3</sup> For Stalin's whole remarks see <http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrq/research/stalinonoppsvi11995.html>

<sup>4</sup> This is confirmed both in Iagoda's confessions in the 1997 volume *Genrikh Iagoda. Narkom vnutrennikhdel SSSR, General'niy komissar gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti. Sbornik dokumentov*. Kazan', 1997, and in the April 11, 1939 confession-statement by Ezhov's right-hand man Mikhail Frinovskii, a translation of which may be consulted at <http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrq/research/frinovskyyeng.html>

## Results Beyond Trotsky: The Moscow Trial Testimony

The conclusion of our verification of the Moscow Trials testimony is this:

\* Whenever we can check independent evidence concerning a contradiction between Moscow Trial testimony and Trotsky's responses, it is the Moscow Trial testimony, not Trotsky's denial, that proves to have been truthful.

\* As far as we can now determine, on the basis of the evidence we now possess, none of the Moscow Trial defendants gave false testimony that was wrung from them by the NKVD, the Prosecution, or anyone else, including Stalin.

The present study too adds credibility to the Moscow Trials themselves, while casting doubt on Trotsky's denials and on the Khrushchev-era and Gorbachev-era "Rehabilitation" reports.

In *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* and in *Leon Trotsky's Collaboration with Germany and Japan* we examine further evidence that Trotsky did urge "terror" against the Soviet leadership and did collaborate with Germany and Japan. These were among the most important and most dramatic charges made at the trials. The evidence that Trotsky was guilty of spurring his Soviet followers to the use of "terror" or assassination against the Stalin leadership goes a step farther towards confirming the basic trustworthiness of the testimony given at the Moscow trials.

As far as we can now determine, on the evidence now available the Moscow Trial defendants:

- (a) were guilty of at least those crimes to which they confessed;
- (b) said what they themselves chose to say in their trial testimony.

This conclusion will be ideologically unacceptable to those who cut their historical conclusions to fit their political prejudices. There is



no lack of such persons in and around the field of Soviet history and in politics. In the present case neither ideological anticommunists nor, of course, Trotskyists will be persuaded by this or any conceivable evidence. "Political correctness" – ideological acceptability to influential forces motivated not by the search for historical truth but by political agendas is, of course, not a category of historical evidence and has no place in the struggle to discover the truth.

In the eyes of many persons the evidence that Trotsky really did urge his followers in the USSR to employ "terror" would appear to justify the Moscow Trials. By the same token the evidence that the defendants in the Moscow Trials were guilty will appear to justify the actions of Stalin and the Soviet government of the day. After all, no country would fail to pursue and deal harshly with persons and groups who were guilty of the crimes to which the Moscow Trials defendants confessed.

Powerful forces both within the field of Soviet studies and beyond it will find this conclusion to be intolerable on political grounds. The Cold War in historical studies against communism continues with a vengeance. The histories of most if not all of the new post-Soviet states are constructed upon a demonization of communism, especially of Stalin and the USSR during his time. The academic study and teaching of Soviet history is dominated by a tacit requirement that Stalin and the USSR during his day be condemned.

Meanwhile Trotskyism is not just tolerated but accorded an honored place in the field of Soviet history. Two avowedly Trotskyist journals, *Revolutionary History* and *Critique*, publish articles in the field of Soviet history. The latter is published by Taylor and Francis Ltd., a major publisher of mainstream academic journals in the U.K. Pierre Broué was eulogized by Bernhard Bayerlein, editor of the anticommunist *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung*. Broué worked with Bayerlein on a number of anticommunist research projects. Broué was a member

of the board of Bayerlein's "International Newsletter of Communist Studies."<sup>5</sup>

Knowledge that the Moscow Trials were honest and the defendants guilty will do much to debunk other harmful "cults" that are still thriving. In some countries the "cult" around Trotsky remains influential on the anti-imperialist and pro-working class Left. The "cult" of the demonization of Stalin is even more widespread, not only geographically but ideologically, its adherents raging from anarchists and Trotskyists, to liberals, to conservatives and fascists.

These "cults" are nourished by the myth that Trotsky and the Moscow Trials defendants were "framed" in the Moscow Trials. They persist only through ignoring the evidence that we have and through misinterpretation, often flagrant, of the evidence that is not ignored.

## The Moscow Trials Testimony as Evidence

Whenever we can check a fact-claim made by a defendant in the Moscow Trials against independent evidence we have found that the defendant was telling the truth, in that the fact-claim in question can be verified independently.

In a few cases a defendant chose to deceive the prosecution, apparently with a view to concealing his responsibility for acts of which, he hoped, the prosecution was unaware, or of preserving what remained of the conspiracy, or both.

Since the defendants' fact-claims that we can check have turned out to be truthful, we have no basis to dismiss other fact-claims whose truthfulness we cannot check. The success of this verification process means that researchers may properly use the fact-claims made by Moscow Trial defendants as evidence.

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<sup>5</sup> See details at <http://www.dr-bayerlein.eu/books.html>

The importance of this result for our further investigation of Leon Trotsky's conspiratorial activities during the 1930s should be obvious. We now have no reason to reject the statements made by defendants concerning Trotsky's conspiratorial activities.

However, we now possess much more evidence of Trotsky's conspiratorial activities than that contained in statements by Moscow Trials defendants. In *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* we examine other evidence of Trotsky's conspiracies. Much of this evidence comes from Trotsky's own false statements, through which he carelessly or unconsciously revealed, in part, that which he wished to conceal. *Leon Trotsky's Collaboration with Germany and Japan* examines more evidence concerning Trotsky's collaboration with Germany and Japan.

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To save space in this book, the bibliography is online. It may be downloaded at:

[https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/mtase\\_bibl.pdf](https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/research/mtase_bibl.pdf)

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