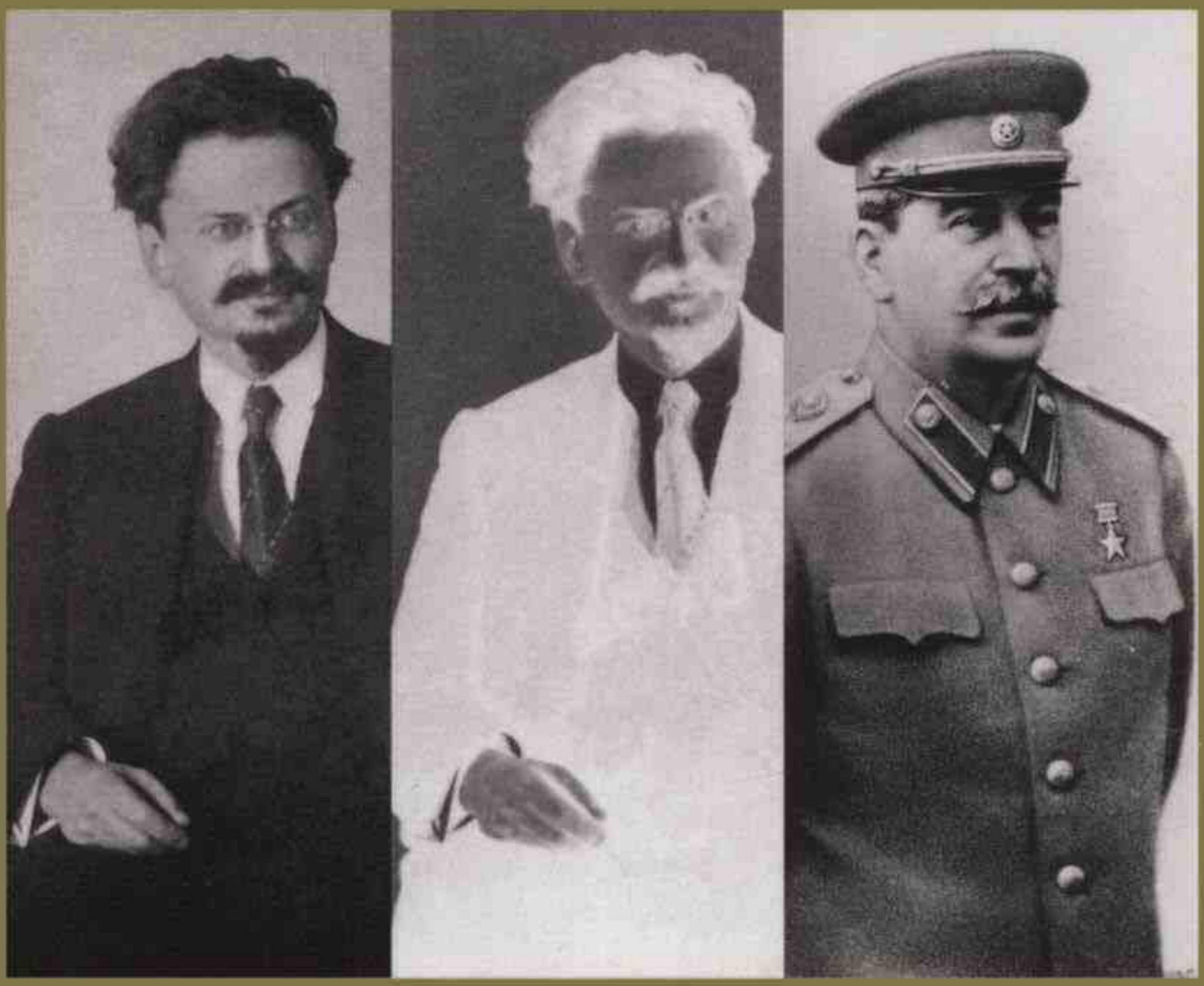
GROVER FURR

LEON TROTSKY'S COLLABORATION WITH GERMANY AND JAPAN



Trotsky's Conspiracies of the 1930s
Volume Two

Leon Trotsky's Collaboration with Germany and Japan

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By Grover Furr

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* * * * *

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Introduction

If an objective research project on the events of those years were to be done, free of ideological dogmas, then a great deal could change in our attitude towards those years and towards the personalities of that epoch. And so it would be a "bomb" that would cause some problems. . .

– Col. Viktor Alksnis, 2000.

. . . it is essential for historians to defend the foundation of their discipline: the supremacy of evidence. If their texts are fictions, as in some sense they are, being literary compositions, the raw material of these fictions is verifiable fact. Whether the Nazi gas ovens existed or not can be established by evidence. Because it has been so established, those who deny their existence are not writing history, whatever their narrative techniques.

– Eric Hobsbawm, 1994, p. 57.

. . . we can demolish a myth only insofar as it rests on propositions which can be shown to be mistaken.

– *ibid.* p. 60.

This chapter and those that follow constitute an inquiry into the evidence that Leon Trotsky collaborated with German and/or Japanese officials, whether governmental or military, during the 1930s.

Trotsky was charged with and convicted *in absentia* of such collaboration at the three Moscow "Show," or public, Trials of 1936, 1937 and 1938.[1] Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov[2] were absent defendants and central figures in all these trials. Trotsky himself proclaimed the charges false but they were widely, though not universally, credited until 1956. On February 25th of that year Nikita Khrushchev delivered his famous "Secret Speech" to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Aside from much other matter that will not concern us here Khrushchev hinted, without expressly affirming, that at least some of the defendants in these trials were punished unjustly.

In succeeding years some of the defendants were "rehabilitated" in the Soviet Union and declared to have been innocent. Under Khrushchev's successors between 1965 and 1985 the wave of "rehabilitations" almost ceased. Subsequently, during Mikhail Gorbachev's tenure between 1985 and the end of the USSR in 1991, an even larger flood of "rehabilitations" took place. Later in the present essay we will discuss the essentially political, rather than juridical, nature of "rehabilitation."

By the late 1980s almost all the defendants at all the Moscow Trials, plus the defendants in the "Tukhachevsky Affair" of May-June 1937 and a great many others had been declared to have been innocent of all charges. The chief exceptions were figures like Genrikh Iagoda and Nikolai Ezhov, two heads of the NKVD[3] who were

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[1] These trials are often called the "Show Trials." Often too they are identified by the names of the one or two most famous defendants. Thus the trial of August 19-24, 1936, is often called the "Zinoviev-Kamenev Trial"; that of January 23-30, 1937, the "Piatakov-Radek Trial"; that of March 2-13, 1938, the "Bukharin-Rykov Trial." The formal names for these trials are as follows: August 1936: "The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre"; January 1937: "The Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre"; March 1938: "The Case of the Anti-Soviet 'Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites.'"

[2] Leon Sedov died on February 16, 1938, shortly before the Third Moscow Trial. He continued to figure prominently in the confessions of some of the defendants, as did his father.

[3] People's Commissariat (= Ministry) of Internal Affairs, which included national security and political police functions.

certainly responsible for massive repressions, and many of their subordinates. Trotsky and Sedov have also been "rehabilitated," though not for the crimes they were accused of at the Moscow Trials since they were not among the defendants and so were not formally convicted.

Meanwhile there is a scholarly consensus that the Moscow Trials were fabrications, the defendants all innocent victims of frame-ups, and all the conspiracies inventions either of the NKVD or of Stalin himself. This consensus is a constituent part of the model, or paradigm, of Soviet history that is dominant within Russia itself and beyond its borders and can usefully be termed the "anti-Stalin paradigm." However, no significant *evidence* that the trials were fabricated and the confessions faked has ever been published. In *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* (2016) I have provided ample evidence that the accusations and confessions were indeed genuine.

The Soviet Archives "Speak"

During the existence of the USSR and especially since Khrushchev's accession to power in 1953 few if any documents concerning the Moscow Trials and repressions of the late 1930s were published in the USSR or made available in the archives to researchers. Khrushchev and authorized historians and writers made a great many assertions about this period of history but never gave anyone access to any evidence about it.

Here is one example. At an historians' conference in December 1962, after many presentations by speakers promoting the official Khrushchev position about questions of Soviet history, the convener, Presidium[4] member Piotr Pospelov, spoke the following words:

> Students are asking whether Bukharin and the rest were spies for foreign governments, and what you ad-

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[4] The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Party was renamed the Presidium in 1952, and again renamed the Politburo in 1966.

> vise us to read. I can declare that it is sufficient to study carefully the documents of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU to say that neither Bukharin, nor Rykov, of course, were spies or terrorists.[5]

Pospelov's words create a false impression. In the 1938 Trial Bukharin and Rykov were not convicted of carrying out espionage *themselves,* but of being leaders in the "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" that did engage in espionage activities. Likewise both Bukharin and Rykov were convicted of recruiting others to engage in acts of violence against others – the best translation here of the Russian word for "terror," which means something quite different in English – but not of engaging in it themselves.

Therefore the implication of Pospelov's words is correct *in the sense most readers will understand* – that a "spy" is someone who himself spies, and a terrorist someone who himself commits acts of violence. But Pospelov is *incorrect* insofar as he wished his audience to understand that their confessions and the verdict against them were wrong. Furthermore, the question was about "Bukharin and the rest" – presumably, all the other defendants in the 1938 Trial, whereas Pospelov restricted his answer to Bukharin and Rykov only.

In the passage that immediately follows the quotation above Pospelov clearly told his audience that the only materials historians should read are the official speeches made at the 22nd Congress:

> "Why is it not possible to create normal conditions for working in the Central Party archive? They do not give out materials concerning the activity of the CPSU." I have already given you the answer.

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[5] *Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie o merakh uluchshenia podgotovki nauchno-pedagogichesikh kadrov po istoricheskim naukam. 18-21 dekabria 1962 g.* M: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka", 1964, 298.

In effect Pospelov was saying: "We are not going to give you access to any primary sources."

That situation continued until the USSR was dissolved. Thanks to documents published since the dissolution of the USSR we can now see that some of the speeches at the 22nd Party Congress (October, 1961) also contained blatant lies about the oppositionists of the 1930s – a fact that fully explains Pospelov's refusal to let anyone see the evidence.

As one example of the degree of falsification at the 22nd Party Congress and under Khrushchev generally we cite Aleksandr Shelepin's[6] quotation from a letter to Stalin by Komandarm 1st rank (= Full General, the rank just below Marshal) Iona E. Iakir, accused of collaboration with Nazi Germany. In Shelepin's quotation from Iakir's letter to Stalin of June 9, 1937, the text read by Shelepin I put in **boldface.** The text in the original letter but *omitted* by Shelepin is in *italics.*

A series of cynical resolutions by Stalin, Kaganovich, Molotov, Malenkov and Voroshilov on the letters and declarations made by those imprisoned testifies to the cruel treatment of people, of leading comrades, who found themselves under investigation. For example when it was his turn Iakir – the former commander of a military region – appealed to Stalin in a letter in which he swore his own complete innocence.

Here is what he wrote:

> *"Dear, close comrade Stalin. I dare address you in this manner because I have said everything, given everything up, and it seems to me that* **I am a noble warrior, devoted to the Party, the state and the people, as I was for many years. My whole conscious life has been passed in self-**

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[6] Head of the KGB (= State Security Committee), the successor to the security and political police functions of the former NKVD.

less, honest work in the sight of the Party and of its leaders – *then the fall into the nightmare, into the irreparable horror of betrayal. And during that short period of my life there were always within me two persons: one who had worked much and honestly for the army, the soviets, the party, and another, who thought up and was preparing vile acts hostile to the country. The investigation is completed. I have been formally accused of treason to the state, I have admitted my guilt, I have fully repented. I have unlimited faith in the justice and propriety of the decision of the court and the state. The investigation has been completed. I have been accused of treason to the state; I have admitted my guilt, I have fully repented. I have unlimited faith in the justice and appropriateness of the court and the government. I know that there can and must be only one sentence – death. I am prepared for this sentence. Nevertheless I appeal to you and to the government and beg you, beg you to believe in the possibility of my correction, to believe that I can still be of use to the state, to which I dedicate my whole being. Perhaps you will consider and decide to allow me to go somewhere in the far North or East, in Kolyma, to work and on rare occasions to learn about the magnificent Land of the Soviets, mine again. I ask you to permit me, even though rarely, to take up "Pravda" and to see, by the amount of the sowing, the production, the transportation, the victories of the party, of the soviets, and of the people, whom I have betrayed.*

I beg you and I understand that I do not have any right to do so. Now **I am honest in my every word, I will die with words of love for you, the Party, and the country, with an unlimited faith in the victory of communism."**[7]

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[7] Shelepin's remarks, here in bold face type, are from his speech to the 22nd Party Congress of the CPSU, *Pravda*, October 27, 1961, p. 10, cols. 3-4. *XXII S"ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza. 17-31 oktiabria 1961 goda. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow, 1962). II, 403. The parts Shelepin omitted, here in italics, are from the original document. My thanks to my colleague Vladimir L. Bobrov, who obtained an image of it for me. A version containing some of Iakir's confession of guilt but still omitting much of the complete text is in the

As Shelepin read it the letter is from an honest, loyal man protesting his innocence. In reality Iakir fully admitted his guilt. Iakir was one of the military figures involved both in collaboration with Germany and with Trotsky.

The falsification goes far beyond the speeches at the 22nd Party Congress. Archival evidence now available permits us to see that Khrushchev, then later Gorbachev, and the historians who wrote under their direction, lied consistently about the events of the Stalin years to an extent that would be scarcely imaginable if we did not have primary source evidence that proves beyond doubt the extent of their lies.

A large number of documents from formerly secret Soviet archives have been published since the end of the USSR. This is a very small proportion of what we know exists. Especially as regards the oppositions of the 1930s, the Moscow Trials, the military "purges," and the massive repressions of 1937-38, the vast majority of the documents are still top-secret, hidden away even from privileged, official researchers.

Yet no system of censorship is without its failures. Many documents have been published. Even this small number enables us to see that the contours of Soviet history in the 1930s are very different from the "official" version.

The Question of Trotsky and Collaboration with Germany and Japan

During the past decade a lot of documentary evidence has emerged from the former Soviet archives to contradict the viewpoint, canonical since at least Khrushchev's time, that the defendants in the Moscow Trials and the "Tukhachevsky Affair" military conspiracy were innocent victims forced to make false confessions.

"Spravka" of the Shvernik Report of 1963-4 first published in *Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv* 1 (1993), p. 194, now normally cited from the volume *Reabilitatsia. Kak Eto Bylo* ["Rehabilitation. How It Happened"] vol. 2 (2003), p. 688.

We have written a number of works, including a number of chapters in the present book and in volume one, *Trotsky's 'Amalgams,'* in which we point out that we now have strong evidence that the confessions were not false and Moscow Trial defendants appear to have been truthful in confessing to conspiracies against the Soviet government. That work has led us to the present question.

Hypothesis

Leon Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov were indicted but absent defendants at each of the three Moscow Trials. If the charges against and the confessions of other defendants were basically accurate, as our research has suggested so far, that has implications for the charges voiced at those trials that Trotsky was in league with fascist Germany and militarist Japan.

Such considerations led us to form the hypothesis for the present study: that a thorough search of published documents from the former Soviet and other archives would turn up more evidence of Trotsky's collaboration with Germany and Japan in addition to that given at the three Moscow Trials. In the first chapter of *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* we make reference to Stephen Jay Gould's essay "Dinosaur in a Haystack" in order to outline the concept of scientific paradigm and its parallel usage in historical investigation.

In particular, it is scientifically and historically justified to hold as proven *for the time being for all practical purposes* a conclusion of nonexistence (in this case nonexistence of Trotsky's guilt) of something for which evidence is lacking despite concerted effort to discover it. This was the state of affairs for many historians for a long time with regard to Trotsky. However, once such evidence is found – assuming the validity of that evidence – the conclusion of nonexistence (in this case of his guilt) ceases to be scientifically or historically valid, even though many historians illegitimately continue to advocate the validity of Trotsky's innocence and therefore to ignore the evidence.

We set out to see whether we could find still more evidence that Trotsky had collaborated with the Germans and Japanese. At a cer-

tain point in our research, when we had gathered a quantity of such evidence, we decided to study it and see what it amounted to. The present volume is the result.

If Trotsky did not collaborate with the Germans and/or Japanese there would be no evidence of his having done so. Of course, in the case of human history and even of science there arises the possibility of fabricated or faked evidence. We have devoted a lot of attention to this problem.

There exists a great deal of evidence concerning clandestine involvement on Trotsky's part with oppositional activities within the USSR during the 1930s quite aside from any collaboration with Germany and Japan. In addition to the testimony by defendants at the Moscow Trials, we also have archival evidence in the form of investigative interrogations to confirm such activity. The present work concentrates solely on evidence of Trotsky's collaboration with German or Japanese governmental or military officials. The charges of German and/or Japanese collaboration were the most shocking. They have always been regarded with skepticism.

For the most part we only cite and analyze *direct* evidence concerning Trotsky and the Germans or Japanese. This is a very narrow approach that excludes a great deal of other, corroborating evidence which tends to add credence to the direct evidence of Trotsky's guilt in collaborating with the fascists. For example, Nikolai Bukharin heard details from Karl Radek about Trotsky's negotiations and agreements with Germany and Japan. Bukharin never directly communicated with Trotsky or Sedov about this. However, there is no reason whatever to doubt that Radek did tell him about Trotsky's collaboration.

By corroborating Radek's testimony on this point – Bukharin agrees that Radek did tell him this, as Radek himself had testified, so Bukharin attests to Radek's truthfulness *here* – Bukharin also tends to indirectly corroborate what Radek said about Trotsky and what Radek claimed to have gotten at first hand from Trotsky himself. That is, Bukharin's testimony confirms that Radek was telling the truth in one instance, and that increases the credibility of

Radek's testimony on other matters, including of his contacts with Trotsky and what Trotsky communicated to him. But here we will examine only Radek's testimony, not Bukharin's. We refer the interested reader to our previous study of Bukharin (Furr and Bobrov 2007). In a few places we do cite some corroborating evidence, mainly for the sake of providing context for the direct evidence.

Objectivity and Persuasion

Political prejudice still predominates in the study of Soviet history, particularly since opposition to what we call the "anti-Stalin paradigm" incurs risks to one's job security, possibilities of promotion, and publication opportunities, among other possible dangers. Conclusions that contradict the dominant model of Soviet history are routinely dismissed as being the result of bias or incompetence. Conclusions that cast doubt upon accusations against Stalin or whose implications tend to make him look either "good" or simply less "evil" than the predominant paradigm holds him to have been, are called "Stalinist." Any objective study of the evidence now available is bound to be called "Stalinist" simply because it reaches conclusions that are politically unacceptable to those who have a strong political bias, be it anticommunist generally or Trotskyist specifically.

The aim of the present study is to examine in the light of the evidence now available the allegations made in the USSR during the 1930s that Leon Trotsky collaborated with Germany and Japan against the USSR. This study is not a "prosecutor's brief" against Trotsky. It is not an attempt to prove Trotsky "guilty" of conspiring with the Germans and Japanese. Nor is it an attempt to "defend" Trotsky against such charges.

We have tried hard to do what an investigator does in the case of a crime in which he has no *parti pris* but only wishes to solve the crime. This is what historians who investigate the more distant past, or the history of countries other than the Soviet Union, do all the time.

We do wish to persuade the fair-minded, objective reader that we have carried out a competent, honest investigation: namely, that we have done the following:

* collected all the evidence we could find supporting the contention that Trotsky collaborated with the Germans and Japanese;

* collected all the "negative" evidence – any "alibi" Trotsky or his son and chief political aide Leon Sedov may have had. We have done this chiefly by paying serious attention to Trotsky's testimony at the Dewey Commission hearings in 1937, where he himself laid out his defense;

* studied all this evidence carefully and honestly; and

* drawn our conclusions logically on the basis of that evidence.

We wish to persuade the objective reader that we have reached our conclusions on the basis of evidence and its analysis and not on any other basis, such as that of political bias. We are not out to arraign or "convict" Trotsky. We remain ready to be convinced that Trotsky did not collaborate with Germany and Japan if, in the future, evidence comes to light that those charges are false.

The Role of Appropriate Skepticism

Throughout this essay we have tried to anticipate the objections of a skeptical critic. This is no more than any careful, objective researcher should do.

In the present chapter we have a lengthy discussion of evidence. In this and the following chapters we follow each presentation of evidence with a critical examination. In the final chapter of this section titled "Conclusion" the reader will find a review and refutation of the objections a sharp but fair-minded critic might have.

We are aware that there is a subset of readers for whom evidence is irrelevant, for whom this is not a matter of evidence but one of

belief or loyalty. We discuss the arguments normally raised from this quarter in the subsection titled "Objectivity and Denial." In any historical inquiry as in any criminal case "belief" and "loyalty" are irrelevant to the truth or falsehood of the hypothesis. A belief that is not rationally founded on evidence cannot be dispelled by a sound argument and evidence.

However, those who cannot bring themselves to question their preconceived ideas may nevertheless be provoked by those same prejudices to look especially critically at the evidence and to find weaknesses in its interpretation that might escape other readers for whom there is less at stake. This sometimes makes objections from such quarters worthy of attention. We have tried hard both to anticipate and to deal with such objections in a satisfactory manner.

Evidence

Before proceeding to cite and study the new archival documents we need to discuss the nature of evidence itself. Whereas "documents" are material objects – in our case, writing on paper – "evidence" is a relational concept. We are concerned with investigating an allegation: that Trotsky conspired with German and Japanese officials. We aim to gather and study the evidence that suggests Trotsky acted as alleged and find the flaws in any putative contrary evidence.

There is no such thing as "absolute" evidence. All evidence can be faked. Any statement – a confession of guilt, a denial of guilt, a claim one has been tortured, a claim one has not been coerced in any way – may be true or false, i.e., an attempt to state the truth as the speaker (or writer) remembers it or a deliberate lie. Documents can be forged and, in the case of Soviet history, often have been. False documents have on occasion been inserted into archives in order to be "discovered." Or it may be alleged that a given document was found in an archive when it was not. Photographs can be faked. Eyewitnesses can lie, and in any case eyewitnesses are so often in error, even when honestly believing that their memories are accurate, that such evidence is among the least reli-

able kind.[8] In principle there is no such thing as a "smoking gun" – a single piece of evidence that is so clearly genuine and powerful that it cannot be denied.

The problems of identifying, gathering, studying, and drawing correct conclusions from evidence are similar in criminal investigation and in historical research. This is especially true when, as in our case, the research is to determine whether a kind of crime took place in the past. But there are important differences, and it's vital to be clear about them.

In a criminal trial the accused has certain rights. The trial has to be finite in length, after which the accused is either convicted or acquitted for good. The defendant ought to enjoy the presumption of innocence and the benefit of any reasonable doubt. The defendant is entitled to a qualified defender whose sole job it is to interpret all evidence in a way so as to benefit his client. Meanwhile, the judge and even the prosecution are supposed to be concerned not only about securing a conviction but also about justice. Once they are reasonably convinced that the defendant is innocent their duty is to dismiss the charges and discharge the accused even though they might be able to sway the jury to convict. These practices, though often "honored more in the breach than in the observance," are intended to prevent an innocent defendant from an unjust verdict and penalty.

Historians are in quite a different situation. People long dead have no rights (or anything else) that need to be defended. Therefore the historian does not have to be concerned with any presumption of innocence, "reasonable doubt," and so on. Unlike a legal verdict no historical conclusion is ever final. The historical inquiry need never end. It can, and will, be taken up again and again as new evidence is discovered or as new interpretations of old evidence are reached. This is in fact what we are doing in the present book. We

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[8] One famous study is Elizabeth Loftus, *Eyewitness Testimony*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

are investigating the question of whether Trotsky collaborated with German and Japanese officials in the light of new evidence, while at the same time reconsidering evidence that has long been available.

Objectivity

Identifying, locating, gathering, and even studying and interpreting evidence are skills that can be taught to anyone. The most difficult and unfortunately all-too-rare skill in historical research is the discipline of objectivity. In order to reach true conclusions – statements that are more truthful than other possible statements about a given matter – a researcher must first question and subject to doubt any preconceived ideas she may hold about the subject under investigation. It is one's own preconceived ideas and prejudices that are most likely to sway one into a subjective interpretation of the evidence. Therefore, the researcher must take special steps to make certain this does not happen.

This can be done. The techniques are known, and widely practiced in the physical and social sciences. They can be adapted to historical research as well. If such techniques are not practiced the historian will inevitably be seriously swayed from an objective understanding of the evidence by her own pre-existing preferences and biases. That will all but guarantee that her conclusions are false even if she is in possession of the best evidence and all the skills necessary to analyze it.

Nowhere is a devotion to objectivity more essential or less practiced than in the field of Soviet history of the Stalin period. As it is impossible to discover the truth absent a dedication to objectivity, this study strives to be objective. Its conclusions will displease, even outrage, a good many persons who are dedicated not to objectivity and the truth but to protecting the legend of Trotsky as an honorable revolutionary or to defending the Cold War-anticommunist paradigm of Soviet history.

Of course we don't claim to have found all the relevant evidence there is. It is overwhelmingly likely that there is a great deal more

such evidence, since the vast majority of primary source documents dealing with the Oppositions of the 1930s are still classified in Russia and the post-Soviet states today and are inaccessible to researchers. But what we have now is a lot. In our judgment there is more than sufficient evidence to validly conclude that Trotsky did indeed collaborate with Germany and Japan more or less as defendants in the second and third Moscow Trials testified. Why Trotsky may have done so is a question worthy of consideration.

The Crisis of May-June 1937

The first document we want to present is one that illustrates both the promise and the problems of interpreting documentary evidence.

June 1937 was a time of great crisis for the Soviet leadership. In April Genrikh Iagoda, Commissar (head) of the NKVD until the previous September, and Avel' Enukidze, until recently both a Central Committee member and high-ranking member of the Soviet government, had begun to confess about their important roles in plans for a *coup d'état* against the government. The month of May had begun with an internal revolt against the Spanish Republican government in which anarchists and Trotskyists participated. The Soviet leadership knew this revolt had involved some kind of collaboration between pro-Trotsky forces there and both Francoist and German-Nazi intelligence.[9] By the beginning of June eight military officers of the highest ranks including Mikhail Tukhachevsky, one of only five Marshals of the Red Army, had been arrested and were making confessions of conspiracy with Trotsky and Trotskyists, with the Rights led by Bukharin, Iagoda and Rykov, and – most alarming of all – with Nazi Germany and Japan.

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[9] We will examine this question in a chapter in volume three of this three-volume study of Trotsky in the '30s.

On June 2 Nikolai Bukharin suddenly reversed himself and confessed to having been one of the leaders of this same conspiracy.[10] That same day Lev M. Karakhan, a leading Soviet diplomat who at one time had been closely linked to Trotsky, also confessed.[11] Marshal Tukhachevsky and the other military leaders evidently continued to make further confessions right up until June 9. At their trial on June 11 they confessed once again and were then convicted, sentenced, and executed.

Before and during the Central Committee Plenum which took place from June 23 to 29 twenty-four of its members and fourteen candidate members were expelled for conspiracy, espionage, and treasonable activities. In February and March Bukharin, Rykov, and Iagoda had been likewise expelled. Never before had there had been such wholesale expulsions from the Party's leading body.

Unquestionably, there was much else that has never been made public. But these events, particularly the military conspiracy, appeared to constitute the gravest threat to the security – indeed, the continued existence – of the Soviet Union since the darkest days of the 1917-1922 Civil War.

Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov had been charged *in absentia* at the first Moscow Trial in August 1936.[12] At the second Moscow Trial of January 1937 Karl Radek had explicitly identified Leon

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[10] Grover Furr and Vladimir L. Bobrov, "Nikolai Bukharin's First Statement of Confession in the Lubianka." *Cultural Logic* 2007. At http://clogic.eserver.org/2007/Furr_Bobrov.pdf This article was first published in the Russian historical journal *Klio* (St Petersburg) 1 (36), 2005, 38-52. I have put the Russian version online at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/furrnbobrov_bukharin_klio07.pdf (Furr & Bobrov)

[11] *Lubianka. Stalin i Glavnoe Upravlenie Gosbezopasnosti NKVD. 1937-1938* (M.: "Materik," 2004), No. 102, p. 225. Online at http://istmat.info/node/31227 and at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/61084

[12] They were accused of "having directly prepared and personally directed the organization in the U.S.S.R. of terroristic acts against the leaders of the C.P.S.U. and the Soviet State." *Report of Court Proceedings. The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre.* Moscow: People's Commissariat of Justice of the U.S.S.R., 1936, p. 180.

Trotsky as the leader of an important anti-Soviet conspiracy. He had specifically mentioned Spain as a place where Trotsky's adherents were dangerous and called on them to turn away from Trotsky. When the "May Days" revolt in Barcelona broke out on May 3 Radek's warning seemed prescient. For the communists, but also for many non-communists who supported the Spanish Republic, this rebellion in the rear of the Republic appeared to be the same kind of thing the Rights, Trotskyists, and military figures were allegedly plotting for the USSR.

Trotsky's Telegram to the Soviet Leadership

On the eve of the June Central Committee (CC) Plenum Trotsky chose to send a telegram from his Mexican exile not to Stalin or the Politburo but to the Central Executive Committee, the highest organ of the Soviet government. In it he directly challenged its members to reject Stalin's leadership and turn towards himself.

> STALINS POLICY IS LEADING TO COMPLETE COLLAPSE INTERNAL AS WELL AS EXTERNAL STOP ONLY SALVATION IS RADICAL TURN TOWARD SOVIET DEMOCRACY BEGINNING WITH OPEN REVIEW OF THE LAST TRIALS STOP ALONG THIS ROAD I OFFER COMPLETE SUPPORT – TROTSKY[13]

A postscript to the original publication of this telegram reads as follows:

> In June 1937 in Moscow, at the address of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) which was then formally

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[13] We have used the original English text of the telegram from a facsimile of the telegram itself in the Volkogonov Archive, Library of Congress, Washington DC. At this time international telegrams were normally sent in English; Trotsky sent it from Mexico. The comments of Stalin and his associates are not on the telegram itself but on the Russian translation provided to them along with it. The telegram was evidently first published in *Novoye Vremia* № 50 (1994) C. 37. We have put this facsimile and the Russian translation with the remarks of Stalin and his associates on the internet at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furr/research/trotsky_telegram061837.pdf

> the highest organ of state power in the USSR a telegram arrived from L.D. Trotsky in Mexico: [text of telegram]. Of course this telegram ended up not in the CEC but in the NKVD, whence it was directed to Stalin as a so-called "special communication." He wrote on it the following remark: "Ugly spy.[14] Brazen spy of Hitler." Stalin not only signed his name under his "sentence," but gave it to V. Molotov, K. Voroshilov, A. Mikoian, and A. Zhdanov to sign.[15]

The late Trotskyist author Vadim Rogovin paraphrased this same article in a footnote:

> Trotsky's telegram ended up not in the CEC but in the NKVD where it was translated from the English (the only way the Mexican telegraph could accept it for sending) and sent to Stalin as a so-called "special communication." Stalin read the telegram and wrote on it a remark that bears witness to the fact that he had clearly lost his self-control: "Mug of a spy. Brazen spy of Hitler!" His signature beneath these words was completed with the signatures of Molotov, Voroshilov, Mikoian and Zhdanov, which expressed their agreement with Stalin's evaluation.[16]

"L.B.", the anonymous author of the article in *Novoe Vremia* dismissed Trotsky's note as a fantasy on Trotsky's part.

> How should we understand Trotsky's proposal? Could he have possibly supposed that they would accept his help? Or that in 1937 a turn towards "Soviet democ-

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[14] *Shpionskaia rozha*, literally "spy-face," Rogovin (see below) translates it as "mug of a spy."

[15] L.B., "Will there be no more 'Secrets of the Kremlin'?" *Novoe Vremia* No. 50, 1994, 37.

[16] Vadim Rogovin. *1937. Stalin's Year of Terror.* Translated by Frederick S. Choate. Oak Park MI: Mehring Books, 1998, p. 487. Chapter 50: The July Plenum of the Central Committee.

> racy" was possible? One can't call this irony; it's more like an illusion.

"L.B."'s cynicism is unfounded. As a number of scholars have shown, a "turn towards Soviet democracy" was indeed a point of struggle in 1937.[17]

Piskun vs Rogovin

In his critical 1997 study of Trotsky Evgenii Piskun wrote:

> This strange document bears witness to the fact that the leader of the Fourth International hoped that the USSR was going to undergo immense changes in the near future and that he would return to power again.
>
> But he was wrong this time too. When the June Plenum of the CC had ended the Party leadership had not changed.[18]

Rogovin agreed that Trotsky must have believed he had a good chance of coming to power:

> Trotsky was not a person given to taking senseless or impulsive steps. Despite the fact that the motives of his appeal remain unclear even today, it is natural to assume that Trotsky possessed information which showed that the true devotion to Stalin of the majority of Party and Soviet leaders was in inverse proportion to their official exclamations of this devotion, and that Stalin's position was extremely fragile and unstable. This might have been the source of Trotsky's hopes

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[17] For the major sources and a summary of them in English see Grover Furr, *Yezhov vs Stalin* (2016) and "Stalin and the Struggle for Democratic Reform", Parts One and Two, *Cultural Logic* 2005. At http://clogic.eserver.org/2005/ 2005.html

[18] Evgenii E. Piskun. *Termidor v SSSR. Idei L.D. Trotskogo i sovetskaia deistvitel'nost' 1920-1980.* Riazan': Russkoe slovo, 1997, 73.

> that, under conditions of the Great Terror which was tearing one member after another from the Party ranks, a consolidation of the leading figures in the country would be possible which would be aimed at overthrowing Stalin and his clique. (Rogovin 487)

Rogovin accepted unquestioningly the orthodox Trotskyist position that Trotsky was not involved in conspiracies with the Germans. But this presented him with a problem: How to explain Stalin's handwritten comment on Trotsky's telegram? Even Rogovin had to admit that, since the note was addressed only to his closest, most trusted associates, it appeared to prove that Stalin and the rest of them did genuinely believe Trotsky was guilty of conspiring with the Germans.

Moreover, Rogovin's attempt at an explanation is factually incorrect. If the term "Great Terror" refers to anything, it refers to what is called in Russian the *Ezhovshchina* or "Ezhov's mass repression," the period of the illegal mass murders carried out by NKVD chief Nikolai I. Ezhov under the guise of combatting subversion. These did not begin until *after* the June 1937 Central Committee meeting. What's more, central aspects of the *Ezhovshchina* remained almost unknown outside a tiny circle of top Soviet leaders for many years.

All Rogovin could offer was the following formulation, which takes us to the heart of our matter:

> The document, as well as many other documents of the Politburo, and even the personal correspondence of its members, show that Stalin and his "closest comrades-in-arms" expressed themselves in a conventional code which was designed to give the impression that they believed in the amalgams they were creating. Otherwise Stalin, who hardly believed in the existence of contacts between Trotsky and Hitler, would not have written such words in a document intended only for his most immediate circle. (Rogovin 487, note)

We now possess additional evidence that Stalin did indeed believe that Trotsky was plotting with the Germans. Rogovin offers no evidence to the contrary. In addition we now also have evidence that Trotsky, as well as many others, actually were conspiring with Germany and Japan. The evidence concerning Trotsky is the subject of this book. Trotsky's telegram of June 18, 1937[19] will serve as an introduction both to the new evidence that has come to light since the end of the USSR and to the problems of and barriers to understanding what it means.

To our knowledge no one has bothered to put all this evidence together or to re-examine in light of this new evidence the question of Leon Trotsky's ties to Japan and Germany, ties alleged by defendants at the Moscow Trials and by the Soviet government. Why is this? The two very different comments by Piskun and Rogovin suggest an answer. Rather than being the object of careful study with an eye to questioning previous knowledge, the new evidence is being marshaled in defense of old historical paradigms.

Piskun's paradigm – that Trotsky was probably preparing for some kind of *coup* against the Soviet leadership – has only rarely been heard for many years. Nevertheless, Piskun reads Trotsky's telegram through the "lenses" of that paradigm, for the text of the telegram itself suggests nothing about any *expectation* of imminent change and return to power. The most that could be said is that the text is perhaps compatible with such an expectation. But we could never deduce such an expectation from the text alone. A sober reading of Trotsky's telegram might be that it is evidence that Trotsky was *hoping* for a return to power in the USSR but nothing more.

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[19] The original telegram seems to be dated June 18, as that date, "18 JUN 1937," is printed or stamped at the top of the last page. That appears to be the date the telegram was sent. «06.20 июнь 1937 г.» is written in small print at the top of the first page of the telegram. That may be the date it was received and translated. Stalin's note, and the signatures of Molotov, Voroshilov, Mikoian, and Zhdanov appear on the translation of the telegram, to which the telegram itself is appended in the archive.

Rogovin's interpretation is even more strained. According to Rogovin Stalin could not possibly have believed Trotsky was a German spy even though (a) Stalin wrote this on the telegram; (b) only his closest associates would see it; and (c) Stalin referred to this alleged espionage by Trotsky on other occasions. Rogovin's paradigm demands that Stalin had invented the charge that Trotsky was collaborating with the Germans (and Japanese). If that paradigm is to be preserved, then Rogovin must maintain that Stalin *must* be faking here too.

But no objective reading of the text of Trotsky's telegram and Stalin's remarks upon it would arrive at Rogovin's conclusions. Furthermore, Rogovin has no evidence to support his position that Stalin invented the charges against Trotsky. He simply assumes this to be true.

Piskun and Rogovin represent antithetical poles in interpreting both this document itself and the question of Trotsky's relationship, or lack thereof, with Germany and Japan. But charges of collaborating with the intelligence services of the major Axis powers were alleged not just against Trotsky but also against many of the defendants at the second and third public Moscow trials of January 1937 and March 1938, as well as against the military commanders tried and condemned with Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky in June 1937.[20]

There is a great deal of such evidence. The present chapter and those that follow concentrate on evidence concerning Trotsky specifically.

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[20] Elsewhere we have set forth a small part of the evidence that Oppositionists did, in fact, have some kind of clandestine political relationship, aimed at the USSR, with Germany and Japan. Grover Furr and Vladimir L. Bobrov, "Nikolai Bukharin's First Statement of Confession in the Lubianka." *Cultural Logic* 2007. At http://clogic.eserver.org/2007/Furr_Bobrov.pdf . This is the English translation of an article and text first published in Russian in the St. Petersburg journal *Klio* No. 36 (March 2007).

In addition, the failure to find evidence that the Oppositionists did have such a relationship would not necessarily mean that no such relationship existed. Indeed, in the case of a deeply clandestine conspiracy we should expect that evidence should be rare and indirect. And, of course, we do have strong evidence of such a conspiracy in the testimony of some of the Moscow Trials defendants and of the "Tukhachevsky affair" conspirators.

The present study does conclude that the evidence now at our disposal strongly supports the existence of collaboration between Trotsky and the Germans and Japanese. This creates a peculiar problem for us as historians since an article or book based upon the evidence – the present book – directly challenges the prevailing consensus among anticommunist writers on the Moscow Trials and specifically on Trotsky.

What's At Stake?

This prevailing consensus is a constituent part of the model, or paradigm, of Soviet history that is dominant within Russia itself and beyond its borders.

At the 1936 Moscow Trial Trotsky and his son Sedov were accused of involvement with the German Gestapo and of involvement with Germans and Japanese at both the 1937 and 1938 Moscow Trials. Numerous witnesses at each of these trials testified that they had direct knowledge of Trotsky's (Sedov's) collaboration. These charges constituted a central feature of the trials.

The allegation that these charges are false likewise constitutes a central feature of the dominant paradigm of Soviet history during the Stalin period. Confirmation of the guilt of Nikolai Bukharin in the crimes to which he confessed guilt has already seriously undermined what we may briefly term the "anti-Stalin paradigm" of Soviet history. Confirmation of Trotsky's involvement with the Germans and Japanese would corroborate the evidence we already have that the charges were true to which the Moscow trials defendants confessed themselves guilty.

* * * * *

On the evidence we have, Trotsky did in fact collaborate with the Germans and Japanese. This is consistent with the charges made against Trotsky and his son at the Moscow trials.

It is not for us to hazard a guess as to what may be the implications of this fact for Trotskyism itself. Insofar as Trotskyism may be considered as a variety of Marxist theory, a set of political principles that are detachable from Trotsky the politician, it may have few implications. But the implications will be more far-reaching for those varieties of Trotskyism that base themselves on a cult of respect for Trotsky the man and are unable to separate him from his ideas.

What Do You Mean "Evidence"?

This statement focuses our attention on a central question: What kind of evidence would we accept? Unless objective criteria are established and then rigorously adhered to, the researcher will almost certainly "find" what his historical preconceptions, his favored paradigm, tells him to look for. In doing so he will either ignore or misconstrue anything that does not fit his preconceived ideas. What a researcher agrees to *accept* as evidence, and to *exclude* as evidence, is too often a reflection of his historical paradigm. The problem of "acceptable evidence" is simply magnified in the case of a charge of secret conspiracy.

There are serious problems with any kind of evidence.

* Confessions in or out of court: They might be fabricated, for any of a number of motives, including currying favor with the prosecution or state; as evidence that one has "repented"; to shift the blame onto someone else; as a result of torture or the threat of torture, threats against one's family, and so on.

* Incrimination by associates: These are open to the same kinds of tampering as are confessions of the accused.

* Documentary evidence: Documents can be forged. Any state has the technical means to fabricate documents that will convince anyone except, possibly, an independent scientific expert who is allowed to use destructive methods of analysis to test the chemical composition of the ink, molecular analysis of paper, etc., in order to determine whether the document is genuine. As this is virtually never permitted in the case of archival documents deemed to be important, skillful forgery is a powerful tool of historical falsification.

Documentary evidence can also be destroyed. Russian researchers have told us that Khrushchev had a great many papers – perhaps amounting to thousands of pages – removed from archives during his leadership in the USSR.[21] Some documents have also been removed from the "closed" Trotsky Archive at Harvard University.[22] No archive is, or can be, completely secure from such manipulation.

Moreover, how likely is it that agreements of espionage and conspiracy would have been written down in the first place? Anything written down at some point would surely have been hidden securely or, more likely, destroyed as soon as read. As long as such written evidence remained it would pose a terrible threat to any conspirator. We can be certain of the existence of one such conspiracy in Soviet history – that among members of the Presidium to get rid of Lavrentii Beria – because it succeeded on June 26, 1953. Yet no prior written record of that conspiracy has ever come to light, and no single, canonical account of it exists even today.

These are just examples. In general, there is no kind of evidence that cannot be forged or faked. Neither is there any kind of evidence that can, by itself, provide conclusive proof of any act.

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[21] E.g. M. Iunge, R. Binner. *Kak terror stal "Bol'shim." Sekretnyi prikaz No.00447 i tekhnologiia ego ispolneniia.* Moscow: AIRO-XX, 2003, 16.

[22] We have discussed this question in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'.*

In this essay I assume that the larger the number of individual items of evidence that are all consistent with a single interpretation, the less is the chance that they and that interpretation are the result of some kind of "orchestration" or fabrication according to a preconceived plan. This should be especially so in the case of documents which were never intended to be public at all. When combined with evidence from documents that were never directly related to any prosecution, the likelihood of fabrication becomes very small indeed. This is similar to what is called "circumstantial evidence" in the legal system. When there is enough of it, circumstantial evidence is the most powerful evidence there is.[23]

Such is the case, I would argue, with Trotsky's telegram of June 18, 1937. As Rogovin recognized, the most significant thing about this telegram is what Stalin wrote upon it. But Rogovin's own conclusion lacks any convincing rationale. No one who was not already convinced that Trotsky was innocent of collaboration with Germany would ever suspect that Stalin did not believe the truth of what he wrote to an audience of his closest associates, remarks never intended to go any further. Rogovin would have us believe that Stalin, Molotov, Mikoian and Zhdanov were "pretending" among themselves that Trotsky was working with the Germans even while knowing perfectly well that it was they themselves who had made this story up. No evidence supports such a conclusion.

If the words on this telegram were the *only* evidence we had that led us to suspect the accusations against Trotsky were not fabricated – not by Stalin or to his knowledge, at least – they would still be highly significant. Stalin saw all investigative materials, including huge quantities of evidence that is either still classified in Russia today or has been destroyed. What's more, we have no evidence that he ever talked in "code" with his associates. In fact, *pace* Trotsky, we have yet to find a single instance in which we can dis-

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[23] "Circumstantial evidence can be, and often is much more powerful than direct evidence." – Robert Precht, a defense attorney in the World Trade Center bombing and director of the Office of Public Service at the University of Michigan Law School, quoted at http://www.pub.umich.edu/daily/1997/jun/06-04-97/news/news3.html .

cover evidence that Stalin lied, while there are a great many examples of Trotsky's deliberately lying in his published works and speeches.[24]

"Fabrication" Of Confessions

In discussions such as these, where any questioning of the dominant paradigm is viewed with distrust and even horror, it is vital that the presentation of the evidence be accompanied by refutations of the anticipated objections to this evidence coming from that same paradigm. So below we will offer a summary rebuttal to paradigmatic objections to some of the evidence we present. The details will come later.

The "canonical view" or "dominant paradigm" of Soviet history is that all defendants in the Moscow Trials were innocent of the charges to which they confessed. But there is no "canonical view" about how the faking of those confessions might have been accomplished.

The transcripts of the three Moscow Trials have been available since the 1930s. According to the dominant paradigm of Soviet history these transcripts are dishonest and the confessions of the defendants recorded in them are fabrications.

But the term "fabrication" does not have any fixed meaning. No one has cited any evidence whatsoever that the confessions were not truthful, so no one is in a position to say anything definite. The charges against the defendants are simply declared to be "fantastic" or "absurd" and the conclusion is drawn that the defendants must have been induced to lie by some means. "Fabrication" is a word that is broad enough in its meaning to cover any kind of falsification.

The allegation that the confessions were false, like any other assertion of fact, can and must be tested in the light of all the other

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[24] We discuss many of them thoroughly in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'*.

available evidence. This is supposed to be done as a matter of course in criminal cases. Historians are under a similar obligation to verify the veracity of confessions as well as of other evidence. We undertook to discharge this responsibility in the first part of *Trotsky's 'Amalgams.'* At the outset we were prepared to find evidence that the confessions of the defendants and/or the other evidence against them were false. In fact, we found that the opposite is the case. The evidence now available strongly confirms the truth of the confessions and other evidence we cite here.

The Issue of Torture

In the present book we devote serious attention to the hypothesis that the defendants in the Moscow Trials and others who directly or indirectly implicate Trotsky in collaboration with Germany or Japan may have been induced to make false accusations by one means or another. Most troubling is the allegation of real or threatened torture.

Specifically, we discuss the "torture" hypothesis in connection with Zinoviev, Ezhov, Uritsky, and Iakovlev (see below). We examine Col. Alksnis' belief that the Tukhachevsky trial defendants were not tortured. We have a great deal of evidence that the defendants in the Moscow Trials were not tortured or otherwise threatened into making false confessions.

All interpretations of the Trial testimony, like all interpretations of any evidence, are hypotheses. "Torture" is one hypothesis. Like any hypothesis, evidence is required before it becomes a reasonable theory of explanation. In this case there is no such evidence.

We have adduced the appeals to the Soviet Supreme Court by four of the defendants at the first Moscow Trial, two of the defendants from the second Moscow Trial, and all but one of those from the third Moscow Trial. All of them insist that they are guilty. These documents were never intended to be made public.

At the second Trial of January, 1937 Karl Radek, one of the chief defendants, directly addressed the suspicion that he had been

threatened into testifying. Radek stated that it was not the investigators that tormented him, but he who tormented his investigators. (1937 Trial 549)

Nikolai Bukharin said that "incriminating evidence" (*uliki*) was what induced him to begin confessing after three months of silence.

> I shall now speak of myself, of the reasons for my repentance. Of course, it must be admitted that incriminating evidence plays a very important part. (1938 Trial 777)

Stephen Cohen has stated that Bukharin was not tortured.

> Unlike many other victims of repression, including the Red Army commanders, it seems that they did not use physical torture on him in prison.[25]

We see no reason to repeat Cohen's reasoning here. Cohen is a world authority on Bukharin and continues to insist that he was entirely innocent while admitting that there is no evidence to support that conclusion. However, it is important to note that neither Cohen nor anyone else has ever found evidence that the Red Army commanders' confessions were obtained through torture.

In early 2006 a confession by Mikhail Frinovskii, second-in-command to Nikolai Ezhov at the NKVD, was published.[26] In it Frinovskii admitted that Ezhov and his co-conspirators, himself included, had tortured and fabricated false charges against a great

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[25] Stephen Cohen (Koen), "Bukharin na Lubianke." Svobodnaia Mysl' 21, No. 3 (2003), 58-63, at 60-61.

[26] "Spetssoobshchenie L.P. Berii I.V. Stalinu s Prilozheniem Zaiavleniia M.P. Frinovskogo. 13 aprelia 1939 g. In *Lubianka. Stalin i NKVD-NKGB-GUKR "Smersh" 1939 - mart 1946.* Eds. V.N. Khaustov, V.P. Naumov, N.S. Plotnika. Moscow: "Materik," 2006. No. 33, pp. 33-50. I have put the original text online at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/Frinovskiiru.html and an English translation (mine) at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/Frinovskiieng.html .

many people. But Frinovskii explicitly said that this was *not* done in the case of the March 1938 Trial of the "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites," the "Bukharin" trial. Frinovskii also makes it clear that Zinoviev and Kamenev, the principal defendants at the first Moscow Trial of August 1936, were guilty.

In this same confession Frinovskii also explicitly states that Bukharin et al. were guilty, and that moreover he and Ezhov were part of this Rightist conspiracy too. Furthermore he states that Bukharin knew Ezhov was involved in this conspiracy and kept quiet about it at the trial, taking this secret to his death.

Frinovskii wrote:

> The preparation of the trial of Rykov, Bukharin, Krestinsky, Iagoda and others.
>
> An active participant in investigations generally, Ezhov kept himself aloof from the preparation of this trial. Before the trial there took place the face-to-face confrontations of the suspects, interrogations, and refining, in which Ezhov did not participate. He spoke for a long time with Iagoda, and that talk concerned, in the main, assuring Iagoda that he would not be shot.
>
> Ezhov had conversations several times with Bukharin and Rykov and also in order to calm them assured them that under no circumstances would they be shot. Ezhov had one conversation with Bulanov, and began this conversation in the presence of the investigator and myself, and finished the conversation one on one, having asked us to leave.
>
> At that moment Bulanov had begun talking about the poisoning of Ezhov. What the conversation was about Ezhov did not say. When he asked us to enter again he said: "Behave yourself well at the trial – I will ask that you not be shot." After the trial Ezhov always expressed regret about Bulanov. At the time of the executions Ezhov suggested shooting Bulanov first and he

> himself did not enter the building where the shootings took place. Here Ezhov unquestionably was ruled by the necessity of covering up his own ties with the arrested leaders of the Right who were going into the public trial.

In no way did Frinovskii deny torturing and fabricating false confessions against innocent people. Rather, he contrasted the way Ezhov handled the "Bukharin" trial defendants with the way he dealt with a great many innocent victims, whom he had tortured by his "bone-breakers" so that they would sign confessions drafted by Ezhov's NKVD men.

To sum up: Frinovskii confessed to widespread torture, but (a) specifically exempted the defendants in the 1938 Trial; (b) specifically stated that Bukharin and the other major defendants at the trial were, in fact, guilty; and (c) made passing reference to the principal defendants in the first Moscow Trial in which he claims that they too were guilty. Frinovskii's confirmation of the guilt of Bukharin and others corroborates all the other evidence we have concerning Bukharin.

Before its publication in 2006 Frinovskii's confession had been fraudulently quoted by historians and by the Soviet Supreme Court itself, suitably expurgated so that it seemed to prove the *innocence*, not the guilt, of the 1938 Trial defendants. This was done in the same manner as Shelepin's dishonest quotation of Iakir's letter, which we briefly examined above.

No hypothesis is worth anything unless it is supported by evidence. With respect to the Moscow Trials and Tukhachevsky Affair there is no evidence to support the "torture" hypothesis, and a great deal of evidence against it. Therefore the "torture" hypothesis must fall.

Other Possible Hypotheses to Account for Bukharin's Confession

Bukharin's confessions are important for us both because they illustrate the issues involved in allegations of torture and because Bukharin explicitly implicates Trotsky. We'll discuss his testimony about Trotsky later in the present essay. Here we are concerned with the "torture" question.

In any trial there are a number of hypotheses aside from the "torture" hypothesis that may account for a false confession of guilt by a defendant:

* The defendant's family is threatened.

* The defendant wishes to "punish himself" to atone for past misdeeds.

* The "Rubashov" explanation made famous in Arthur Koestler's book *Darkness At Noon* – that "the Party demands it," the Party is history's instrument and so history demands it, and so on.

* The defendant has been promised favored treatment by the Prosecution in return for falsely accusing others.

In Bukharin's case there is no evidence to support any of these hypotheses.

The main reason defendants confess to crimes of which they are guilty is their calculation that the prosecution has sufficient evidence to convict them of the crime(s) in question, rendering further denial useless, indeed counterproductive. A defendant decides to cooperate with the prosecution in hopes of more lenient treatment by the court – of "getting the best deal he can." It now seems beyond doubt that this was the reason for Bukharin's confession of guilt. At the second Moscow Trial of January 1937 four defendants who appeared to have cooperated fully with the prosecution – Radek, Sokol'nikov, Arnol'd and Stroilov – were sentenced to prison instead of execution. Two of these, Grigory Sokol'nikov and Karl Radek, were among the principal defendants. This was a

strong incentive to cooperate for any defendant for whom further denial seemed hopeless.

Frinovskii's statement corroborates Bukharin's own testimony at trial. Bukharin himself said that "the incriminating evidence" was the primary factor motivating his confessions, which began with his first one on June 2, 1937. Frinovskii testified that Ezhov promised Bukharin and others that they would not be shot as long as they did not disclose Ezhov's own involvement with the conspiracy. Frinovskii does not claim that he actually heard Ezhov say this. But he does state that Ezhov did not organize any false confessions in this trial. Frinovskii himself stated that he knew that Bukharin was guilty. And indeed Bukharin did not mention at his trial that Ezhov was a co-conspirator.

Frinovskii also confirms Bukharin's guilt as a conspirator known to Ezhov. This corroborates a great deal of other evidence we now possess, including some confessions of Iagoda published for the first time in 1997.

Towards the end of these chapters we return to the matter of torture in a different way: to consider the allegations of torture and how they have functioned in the historiography and mythology of Trotsky's role, the Moscow Trials, and the history of the Stalin period generally.

Why Did None of Trotsky's Supporters at the Moscow Trials Defend Trotsky?

None of Trotsky's longtime and devoted supporters among the Moscow Trial defendants defended Trotsky or their actions in supporting him. Not only did they plead guilty to various crimes, including working with Trotsky; most of them recanted their former longtime allegiance to him (not all: Khristian Rakovsky, for one, did not). To anticipate one objection, it may be asked: how is this to be explained other than by the fabrication of false testimony through torture or some other means?

In a criminal case we should not think it strange if co-conspirators "fall out" and denounce one another, as the longtime Trotskyists did during their testimony at the public Moscow trials. Moreover, we should also consider the trial from the viewpoint of the prosecution, the Stalin government. What was the purpose of having these public trials in the first place?

Like any criminal prosecution, of course, the trial was to deter further criminal (in this case, treasonous) activity and encourage those who suspected such activity to report it to authorities. But larger motives were doubtless at play as well.

Given the political conjuncture of the mid-1930s it seems safe to assume that the trials were also aimed to demonstrate to the world that these high-level conspiracies had been nipped in the bud, that the Soviet government was still in charge, and that, therefore, Soviet security was not adversely affected. The Soviets may have feared that, if the USSR were seen to have been weakened by serious conspiracies at the top, some combination of enemy states would attack them. They also feared that the Western powers, led by France and the U.K., would not agree to "collective security"—mutual defense treaties with the USSR against Nazi Germany— because of German penetration of the Soviet leadership including, especially, the military leadership.

That these fears were well founded is suggested by the facts that (a) Japan did indeed attack the USSR – twice, in 1938 and a larger assault in 1939; and (b) the Allies did refuse to make any mutual defense treaties with the USSR. Rather, they continued to encourage Hitler to attack the USSR. The late Alvin D. Coox, the leading expert on Soviet-Japanese relations during this time, concluded that the Japanese attack on the USSR at Lake Khasan in 1938 was directly motivated by the testimony of General Genrikh Liushkov, who defected to Japan in July 1938 and reported that the Red Army was seriously weakened.[27]

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[27] Coox 1, 92; Coox 2, 145.

If we assume that this was the purpose of the "Show Trials" it stands to reason that the only defendants who would appear in them would be those who would attack Trotsky and say they were wrong, the USSR was right, and so on.

Why Is There No German or Japanese Evidence of Trotsky's Collaboration?

> "Most conspiracy theorists don't understand this. But if there really were a C.I.A. plot, no documents would exist." (Shane 2009)[28]
>
> Instructions on concrete organization questions regarding preparation for underground conditions must be given only verbally. . . . At the very least it should have been specified that these names and addresses be given strictly orally. . . [29]

In the course of this essay we will show that there is a large amount of mutually-corroborative evidence of Trotsky's German-Japanese collaboration from the Soviet side. In addition we have important evidence from German and Japanese sources of collaboration by members of the Soviet opposition, including by some who themselves claimed to have been working with Trotsky.

But no direct evidence of German or Japanese collaboration with Trotsky has been discovered outside the former USSR. There are a number of possible explanations:

* Trotsky never collaborated with the Germans or Japanese. All the Soviet evidence is fabricated.

If Trotsky did collaborate the following possibilities exist:

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[28] Gerald Posner, "author of an anti-conspiracy account of the Kennedy assassination, on efforts to obtain C.I.A. documents relating to the assassin."

[29] O. Weber. "How Not to Prepare For Underground Conditions of Revolutionary Work." *The Communist International.* July 1, 1932, 417.

* Many of these archives were destroyed during the war.

* Nobody has looked for such evidence. At least, we are not aware anybody has done so, particularly in the unpublished papers of the German generals allegedly involved.

* These archives too might have been "purged."

* There never was any archival evidence of this collaboration because conspiratorial information of this kind is typically not written down at all.

We know that the Soviet archives have been purged by Khrushchev, and perhaps by others. Despite our limited experience working with other archives, we know of two cases in which archival materials have "disappeared." In addition most Soviet archives are not open to researchers. Given the evidence that we have discovered in the relatively few archival documents that have been published to date it seems likely that further evidence implicating Trotsky may be contained in archives that are still classified. Later in this essay we briefly discuss the "purging" of the Trotsky archive at Harvard of incriminating materials.

In many countries it is normal to keep intelligence archives secret indefinitely. This is certainly the case in the USA. We suggest it is logical to suspect the same thing in the case of Germany and Japan.

There is a great deal of evidence that the military commanders led by Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky did indeed collaborate with the German General Staff and with the Japanese. We have indirect confirmation of this from a German archive and more direct confirmation in one document from the Czech Archives. We discuss this evidence in more detail in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams.'*

In discussing their espionage for Germany several Soviet defendants said they had dealt directly with German General Kurt von Hammerstein-Equord. Rumor, at least, of this collaboration evidently survived in Hammerstein's family. Although to our knowl-

edge no written record of that collaboration exists, it appears that no one has actually looked for such records.[30] Nor has anyone ever undertaken to survey the surviving papers of the German generals allegedly involved.

We believe that the single most likely reason for the absence of such evidence is simply that no one should expect a conspiracy like this to be documented anywhere, ever, much less in archives. The demands of secrecy and security require that such information be exchanged only by word of mouth.

The lack of archival or in fact of any documentary evidence of the successful conspiracy against Lavrentii Beria has already been cited. This conspiracy must have involved at least half a dozen men. Accounts of it by its participants do not agree in details except in this: it was all planned and carried out through oral communication. There is no mention of any written communication. What does exist in the archives is the outline of a speech to be delivered by Malenkov at the Presidium meeting of June 26, 1953. It was at this meeting, we know, that Beria was either arrested or killed. Malenkov was certainly a party to whatever occurred. Yet according to the outline of Malenkov's speech Beria was to be removed as head of the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs, including the internal police force) and made Minister of the Petroleum Industry.[31]

Alleged Lack Of Non-Soviet Evidence

The Trotsky archives at Harvard have been purged of evidence that Trotsky supporters with privileged access to this otherwise-closed archive found embarrassing to Trotsky's reputation, as we demonstrated in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams.'* The materials purged in-

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[30] Hans Magnus Enzensberger. *Hammerstein oder der Eigensinn. Eine deutsche Geschichte.* Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2008, pp. 234; 213-215.

[31] The outline of Malenkov's speech is in *Lavrentii Beriia. 1953. Stenogramma iiul'skogo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty.* Ed. V. Naumov, IU. Sigachev. Moscow: MDF, 1999, pp. 69-70.

cluded, at the very least, further evidence about the existence of the "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" and Trotsky's correspondence with supporters within the USSR.

The late Pierre Broué, in his day the foremost Trotskyist historian in the world and a person who enjoyed widespread respect from anticommunist scholars, concluded that this evidence meant little since it only demonstrated the existence of a bloc in 1932. Broué assumed that because the only evidence that was not successfully purged from the archive happened to be from 1932 that must have been the only time the bloc existed. That is, Broué erroneously assumed in his article that there was no bloc after 1932 because there is no evidence *in Trotsky's archive* for the bloc after 1932.

This is an invalid assumption. It ignores the fact that the archive has been purged. Had those who purged Trotsky's archive done an even more thorough job we would not even have this evidence. Yet that would in no way imply that no evidence of the bloc ever existed. Much less would it imply that the bloc itself never existed. "Lack of evidence" – in this case, of the existence of the bloc after 1932 – "is not evidence of lack" – that such evidence never existed.

If those who purged the Harvard Trotsky archive of incriminating documents had been more thorough they would have also taken the certified mail receipts of Trotsky's letters to oppositionists in the USSR and Trotsky's and van Heijenoort's notes about the "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites." Then what would we now have? We'd have the Gorbachev-era "rehabilitation" document denying that there ever was such a "bloc," and Trotsky's staunch denial that there ever was such a "bloc." Plus we'd have the insistence of the Soviet Prosecutor, Vyshinskii, and the confessions of a number of Moscow Trial defendants, that there was indeed such a "bloc."

Getty's discovery in the Trotsky archive corroborates the testimony of the Moscow Trial defendants. It is evidence that they did not lie, since in the few instances where we can get independent evidence – as here – that evidence supports the trial defendants' confessions. Likewise it corroborates the statements of the Prosecutor—that is, of "Stalin," in the reductive language of

anticommunist writers. The testimony of the trial defendants and the Soviet prosecutor about the bloc and about Trotsky's correspondence turns out to have been truthful, while Trotsky's testimony and that of the Gorbachev-era Soviet government is false.

This is not direct evidence of any Trotsky collaboration with Germany or Japan. But it is consistent with such allegations, since it corroborates the testimony of the same witnesses on a related matter. Trotsky denied collaborating with Axis representatives just as he denied existence of the bloc and contact with his Soviet supporters. Therefore the lack of evidence in Trotsky's archive of any contact with the Axis is not evidence that such evidence was never there.

We do have a little non-Soviet evidence of such collaboration. In February 1937 the Japanese Minister of War, General Hajime Sugiyama, revealed in a meeting that Japan was in touch with oppositionists within the USSR who were providing the Japanese with military intelligence.[32]

Other examples of non-Soviet evidence attest to the real existence of the conspiracies alleged by the Stalin government. There is the Arao Document, still extant in 1962-63. We have direct testimony from the German ambassador to Czechoslovakia that Hitler knew that high-ranking military figures in the USSR were preparing a *coup d'état*. This document, in the Czech national archives, was only discovered in 1987. This document is corroborated by correspondence found in captured German archives disclosed in 1974 but not recognized until 1988 (see the section on the Mastny-Benes note in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'*).

On June 13, 1938 General of the NKVD Genrikh S. Liushkov defected to the Japanese. At a press conference prepared by the Japanese he claimed that the alleged conspiracies in the USSR were

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[32] "Soviet Links Tokyo with 'Trotskyism.'" *New York Times* March 2, 1937, p. 5. My thanks to Sven-Eric Holmström, who obtained and has shared with me a copy of the original article from the Japanese newspaper *Miyako Simbun* of February 20, 1937.

faked. But privately Liushkov told the Japanese that Stalin was convinced there were real conspiracies, including the military conspiracy. He also confirmed that the conspirators were linked with the Tukhachevsky group through Gamarnik. Liushkov confirmed that the conspirators wanted to join forces with the Japanese to inflict defeat upon the Soviet military, and that some of them had been conspiring directly with the Japanese military. We discuss Liushkov's testimony in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* and in Chapter 17 of *The Murder of Sergei Kirov.*

Even if we had no non-Soviet evidence of collaboration between Soviet oppositionists and Axis representatives that would not mean that no such evidence ever existed. Much less would it mean that no such collaboration took place, for such collaboration might well not leave any evidence. However, despite frequent allegations to the contrary, we do possess evidence of the anti-Soviet conspiracies that could not have been fabricated by the Soviets.

Soviet Evidence

No researcher today, no matter how anti-Soviet, dismisses Soviet evidence just because it is Soviet. Evidence from Soviet archives is routinely regarded as valid. For example, later in this essay we examine pretrial testimony of Genrikh Iagoda, Ezhov's immediate predecessor as head of the NKVD and defendant at the 1938 Moscow Trial, and will show that it is cited unproblematically as genuine by extremely anticommunist scholars. It includes testimony about Trotsky. In collaboration with my colleague Vladimir L. Bobrov the present author has published and analyzed Bukharin's first confession of June 2, 1937. (Furr & Bobrov) This document is still top-secret in Russia. In it Bukharin directly implicates Trotsky.

Lengthy Quotations

Much of the following chapters consists of direct quotations from primary sources. We understand that this increases the length of these chapters. However, in a study such as this one we cannot do without these quotations. The primary sources constitute the evidentiary basis for the analysis and conclusions. Some quotations

are from sources that are not easy for most readers to obtain, such as the English versions of the Moscow Trial transcripts. Even more of them are from documents not available in English at all. Marshal Budennyi's letter to Marshal Voroshilov, which we have discussed in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams,'* is an archival document that had never been published in any language and whose contents are entirely new to the scholarly world.[33]

In the age of the Internet there is no reason why any scholar should ever cite archival or hard-to-obtain materials without making them available to the reader. We could have put the primary source quotations onto a separate file and inserted hyperlinks when appropriate, and considered doing so. Doing so, however, would force the reader either to ignore the evidence or to move back and forth between the document and the Internet. We feared such a procedure would be distracting to a careful reader and so decided against it.

We urge the reader to study carefully the quotations from the primary sources. Like any work of scholarship this book stands or falls on the evidence and its analysis.

In this book all boldface emphases are by me unless otherwise noted.

I have put the central documents discussed in this book online in both the Russian original and in English translation. See the URL cited at the beginning of the Bibliography.

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[33] See Vladimir L. Bobrov and Grover Furr, "Marshal S.M. Budennyi's on the Tukhachevsky Trial. Impressions of an Eye-Witness." (in Russian). *Klio* (St. Petersburg) No. 2 (2012), pp. 8-24.

Chapter 1. A Brief Overview of the Evidence

Our aim in these chapters is to cite and analyze all of the evidence that directly ties Trotsky to collaboration with Germany or Japan. We follow each citation of evidence with an analysis of that evidence. Because all evidence may be interpreted in various ways, no evidence is left to "speak for itself." We have also striven to cite and study contextual and corroborative evidence, as all analysis of evidence requires.

There is no such thing as "absolute proof." This ought to go without saying. What gives the complex of existing evidence its power is its mutually corroborative or reinforcing character, the sheer quantity of it, and the fact that it comes from different sources.

Strictly speaking eye-witness evidence is not "circumstantial" in the same manner as other evidence. We pay special attention to the testimony of those who claim they were told by Trotsky himself of his ties with Germany and Japan. This testimony is mutually corroborative too. We will examine the extent to which the credibility of the eye-witnesses can be verified by cross-checking some of the statements they make with other evidence at our disposal.

In *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* we devote a great deal of attention to the job of verifying the Moscow Trials testimony. Aside from verbal denials there can be no absolute evidence that Trotsky did *not* collaborate with the Germans or Japanese. Therefore any investigation must search for evidence that he *did* collaborate.

We also tried hard to find evidence that supports the contrary hypothesis: that the confessions of all these people, whether at the Moscow Trials or otherwise, were "fabricated" and false. This would impugn the evidence that Trotsky did collaborate, and so represent "negative" evidence of a sort. But we have been unsuc-

cessful. We feel confident in saying that, at this point at least, no such evidence has ever been discovered by anyone.

The introduction to the Report of the Dewey Commission, which was convened in 1937 to examine the charges against Trotsky, itself states:

> If Leon Trotsky is guilty of the acts with which he is charged, no condemnation can be too severe.

On the evidence now available, the only objective conclusion must be that Trotsky did indeed collaborate with the Germans and Japanese. If evidence to the contrary should surface in the future we must be ready to review and, if necessary, change this conclusion.

Trotsky Lied

Trotsky denied working with Germany or Japan, as charged in the 1937 and 1938 Moscow Trial by several of the defendants. But we now know he lied to the very friendly Dewey Commission in 1937 about other matters far less serious. We have documented many of these lies in the two sections of *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'.*

On the basis of his research in the Trotsky papers at Houghton Library, Harvard University, J. Arch Getty pointed out in 1986 that Trotsky had been in written contact with his followers in the USSR at least in 1932. Either Trotsky himself or one of his secretaries took some pains to conceal these connections.

The noted French Trotskyist scholar Pierre Broué, who also studied these papers and acknowledged Trotsky's lies, explains them as an attempt to deny any plausibility to the "Stalinist" accusations against him at the Moscow Trials, as well as to protect any further Trotskyist supporters not yet uncovered in the USSR.[1]

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[1] Pierre Broué, "Trotsky et le bloc des oppositions de 1932." *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* 5 (Jan-Mar 1980), 29.

From Trotsky's point of view this made perfect sense. Why give Stalin and his colleagues additional ammunition in their war with him? But for the historian it means that Trotsky's denials, not only of the existence of the bloc, but of any charge, cannot simply be taken at face value. As Getty has pointed out elsewhere:

> The point here is that Trotsky lied. . . . [H]e had good reasons to lie. But what he said was not the truth. It was not "objective."[2]

We cite this not to blame Trotsky for lying (although many would blame him for the conspiracies themselves). Lying is an essential part of any conspiracy. Trotsky had good reason to lie. But the fact that Trotsky lied means that we must set aside any denials on Trotsky's part.

It is to be expected that persons will lie when necessary to deflect punishment or blame from themselves. No one pays much attention to denials of guilt on the part of persons suspected of a crime. In many countries an accused person has the right to lie in his own defense, though of course at his own peril too. To any investigator and to any historian as well an accused's confession of guilt may be much more significant than a claim of innocence. So Trotsky's claim of innocence means little in itself.

However, Trotsky never did confess. He lied, and "got away with it" - and not merely insofar as the Dewey Commission members and its audience were concerned. To this day very few books about Trotsky even mention his many proven lies. I have never found a single book about Trotsky that attempts to explore the implications of Trotsky's many demonstrable falsehoods. Very few Trotskyists are even aware of them. What's more, on the evidence now available we can validly conclude that Trotsky lied about a great deal more.

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[2] Getty, post to H-RUSSIA list Nov. 24, 1998. See http://tinyurl.com/getty-trotsky-lied .

It is no wonder that Trotsky lied in order to conceal his conspiratorial activities. Keeping such a thing secret would have been an elementary *sine qua non* of such a conspiracy. The German and Japanese participants, if asked about this, would also have denied it. In lying, they would have felt certain that they were being loyal to their countries and to their military oaths. General Ernst Köstring, German military attaché in Moscow, did deny the contact with the conspirators that he was charged with.[3]

Trotsky's Archive Falsified

In volume one of this study, *Trotsky's 'Amalgams,'* we examine the falsification of the Trotsky archive in more detail. What follows is a brief outline for the readers of volume two.

We know that there has been a practice of falsifying what Trotsky did that extended to the Trotsky papers themselves. Getty has pointed out that the correspondence between Trotsky and Oppositionists in the USSR had been removed from the Trotsky Papers at Harvard at some time before they were opened to researchers in January 1980.[4] Broué and Getty both note that Trotsky's secretary Jean van Heijenoort reminded Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov of his (Trotsky's) correspondence about the bloc at the time of the Dewey Commission hearings. Trotsky chose to lie about this. Van Heijenoort knew the Trotsky Papers better than anyone else. But he never revealed that he had personal knowledge that Trotsky (and Sedov) had deliberately lied to the Dewey Commission. Therefore van Heijenoort lied too – an issue we investigate in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams.'*

Isaac Deutscher was also given special access to the Trotsky Papers by Trotsky's widow so he could write his famous three-

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[3] Herman Teske, ed., *Profile bedeutender Soldaten. Band I. General Ernst Köstring Der militärischer Mittler zwischen dem Deutschen Reich und der Sowjetunion. 1921-1941.* (Frankfurt/M.: Mittler, 1965),

[4] Getty, 34 n.18.

volume biography of Trotsky. But Deutscher did not reveal the existence of the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites or of van Heijenoort's letter. Van Heijenoort, Deutscher, or conceivably some other defender of Trotsky's legacy with rare privileged access deliberately falsified his archive.

This makes one doubly curious as to exactly what was in those letters from Trotsky to the Oppositionists that have been removed and for which Getty found only the certified mail receipts. The question remains: What information in those letters to his followers in the USSR would have been so sensitive that persons loyal to Trotsky felt it necessary to remove them even while leaving sensitive *personal* materials alone? The logical answer is: sensitive *political* material.

But this could not have been mere evidence that Trotsky was in contact with his followers in the USSR. *That* evidence still remains in the Archive. Getty wrote:

> Sedov's address book contained the exile addresses of Trotskyists in the USSR. *Trotsky Papers* 15741. The Exile Correspondence section of the *Trotsky Papers* contains copies of such letters. (Getty, Trotsky, 34 n. 16)

Those of Trotsky's followers who had access to the Trotsky Papers did not feel that this material was politically sensitive enough to remove. So what would have been? At the top of any such list would be: material that confirmed the accusations made against Trotsky at the Moscow Trials. Such evidence would have irreparably ruined Trotsky's reputation while justifying, in the eyes of many, the repressions of the late 1930s and, therefore, Stalin. Such evidence would have threatened to cut the foundation out of Trotskyism.

Trotsky's denial that he was involved in conspiring with the Germans and Japanese cannot be accepted as evidence, since, when accused of a crime, both the innocent and the guilty would tend to claim innocence.

The path is now cleared for us to study the evidence that does exist.

Evidence from the Three Moscow Trials

The testimony of the defendants at the three Moscow "Show" Trials is routinely dismissed as false. The defendants are said to have been threatened, or tortured, or in some other way induced to confess to absurd crimes which they could not have committed.

As we have exhaustively demonstrated in the twelve chapters that comprise the first part of *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* this is all wrong. There is no evidence worthy of the name that the defendants were threatened, or tortured, or induced to give false confessions by promises of some kind.

Under Khrushchev, again under Gorbachev and, in fact, right up to this day the official stance of both Soviet and Russian regimes has been that the defendants' confessions are false. The investigative materials, all but a small fraction of which are still classified in Russia today, have been scoured by anticommunist historians for any evidence that would discredit the Trials and prove the defendants' confessions were false. But, despite their intense desire to find such evidence, none has been discovered. This failure can make us reasonably confident that no such evidence exists.

In 1992 during the short-lived "glasnost'" period under Eltsin the appeals to the Soviet Supreme Court of ten of the Moscow Trials defendants were published in the newspaper *Izvestiia*. All the defendants in question had been sentenced to death on the basis of their own confessions and the accusations of other defendants. This was their last chance to retract their confessions and proclaim their innocence. Not one of them did so. Every one of them reconfirmed his own guilt.

In 2013 the appeals of all but one of the defendants (Khristian Rakovsky) in the third Moscow Trial of March 1938 were published. Once again, all repeated that they were guilty of the crimes

of which they had been convicted. We have discussed these appeals in more detail in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams.'*

Most people who disregard the confessions of the defendants at the Moscow Trials have never studied the transcripts of these trials. They dismiss them because they have been *told* that the defendants' confessions were fabricated. In *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* we demonstrated that the evidence given in those confessions that we can now check from independent sources is in fact corroborated.

A number of the defendants at the Moscow Trials testified that Trotsky was collaborating with Germany or Japan. Some testified that they had been told of Trotsky's collaboration personally by Trotsky, personally by Trotsky's son Leon Sedov, or in notes or letters from Trotsky or Sedov. Other defendants said that they had been told of Trotsky's collaboration at second hand.

In these chapters we will concentrate on this first-hand testimony of Trotsky's collaboration. At the end of the chapter we will say something about the indirect or second-hand evidence to note how it corroborates the first-hand evidence.

The August 1936 Trial: Valentin Ol'berg

In the August 1936 trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and others the only first-hand testimony to collaboration between Trotsky and the German government concerns collaboration with German intelligence. Defendant Valentin Ol'berg claimed that he obtained from the Gestapo a Honduran passport to get into the USSR with the help of his brother Paul, a German agent. He further testified that he was given the money to buy it from the German Trotskyite organization because Sedov had told them to provide it.

Ol'berg claimed that he had been in direct contact with Trotsky. We know that this latter statement is true because letters from Ol'berg remain in the Harvard Trotsky Archive. These letters are not incriminating. But this means nothing, since we know that the Trotsky Archive has been purged.

Getty discovered evidence in the Trotsky Archive that Trotsky had "safe contacts in Berlin, Prague, and Istanbul" (Getty 28). Insofar as German Trotskyists did exist, therefore, the contact Ol'berg alleged *could* have happened. The alleged contacts between Trotskyists and the Gestapo were for the joint purpose of organizing assassination attempts on Stalin and Voroshilov.[5]

Ol'berg claimed there was systematic collaboration between the Gestapo and German Trotskyists with Trotsky's consent. From Prosecutor Vyshinskii's Opening Statement:

> As the investigation has established, V. Olberg arrived in the U.S.S.R. with the passport of a citizen of the Republic of Honduras obtained with the aid of the German Secret Police (Gestapo).
>
> On this point V. Olberg, during examination in the office of the State Attorney of the U.S.S.R., testified
>
> "... Sedov promised to help me to obtain a passport to return to the U.S.S.R. once more. But I succeeded in obtaining a passport with the help of my younger brother, Paul Olberg. Thanks to my connections with the German police and their agent in Prague, V. P. Tukalevsky, I, by means of a bribe, obtained the passport of a citizen of the Republic of Honduras. The money for the passport – 13,000 Czechoslovakian kronen – I obtained from Sedov, or rather, from the Trotskyite organization on Sedov's instructions." (Vol. XXI, p. 262)
>
> Re-examined on the question of his connection with the Gestapo, V. Olberg on July 31 of this year testified:
>
> "Confirming also my testimony of May 9 of this year, I emphasize that my connection with the Ge-

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[5] There is no testimony at this trial about any Trotsky contacts with the Japanese.

> stapo was not at all an exception, of which one could speak as of the fall of an individual Trotskyite. It was the line of the Trotskyites in conformity with the instructions of L. Trotsky given through Sedov. The connection with the Gestapo followed the line of organizing terrorism in the U.S.S.R. against the leaders of the C.P.S.U. and the Soviet Government." (1936 Trial, 25)

From the trial transcript:

> Then, continues Olberg, I wrote a letter to Sedov in Paris telling him about the proposal made by the agent of the Gestapo, and asked him to inform me whether L. D. Trotsky would approve of an arrangement with such an agent. After some time I received a reply sanctioning my actions, that is to say, my understanding with Tukalevsky. Sedov wrote saying that the strictest secrecy was necessary, and that none of the other members of the Trotskyite organization was to be informed about this understanding. (1936 Trial, 89)

Interrogation of Pavel Ol'berg

Volume two of the document collection *Politbiuro i Lev Trotskii* (PiLT2), published in 2013, contains a single interrogation of Pavel Ol'berg. It is dated May 5, 1936. Pavel Ol'berg confirms that his brother Valentin

> ...lived in Prague from the summer of 1933 to the end of 1934. During this time he obtained the Honduran passport and, as I have already testified in my previous confessions, traveled to the USSR in order to organize a terrorist act against Stalin as an assignment he had received from Lev Sedov. (274)

Pavel Ol'berg stated that his brother Valentin had contact "with the German secret police (Gestapo)." He continued:

> During his first trip to the USSR in 1933 [Valentin] Ol'berg was not able to make contact with the Trotskyist organization and get himself established in the USSR. Then he returned to Prague, where he maintained his contact with the Gestapo. When he received his assignment from Sedov in 1934 to go to the USSR to prepare a terrorist act against Stalin he reported this to the Gestapo. Then he received the assignment from the Gestapo to accept this [Sedov's] assignment and to stop off in Berlin for instructions before his trip to the USSR ...
>
> The Gestapo helped him obtain the passport. He received from Sedov the money to buy the passport, 13,000 Czech crowns. In addition, before his trip to the USSR he also received money from the Gestapo. What sum he received from the Gestapo, I do not know.

Valentin Ol'berg's wife Betty Ol'berg also knew about her husband's contact with the Gestapo. (275) In the one interrogation of Betty Ol'berg now available (PiLT2, 251 ff.) she admits to knowing that her husband had been assigned by Trotsky's son Sedov to murder Stalin and other Bolshevik leaders but does not mention the Gestapo. This interrogation is dated April 26, 1936, nine days before Pavel Ol'berg's.

Conclusion: the 1936 Moscow Trial

Ol'berg connected Trotsky or Sedov directly with the German Gestapo. Ol'berg repeated this charge in his direct testimony:

> *Vyshinsky*: Connection between the German Trotskyites and the German police - was that systematic?
>
> *Olberg*: Yes, it was systematic and it was done with Trotsky's consent.
>
> *Vyshinsky*: How do you know that it was done with Trotsky's knowledge and consent?

Olberg: One of these lines of connection was maintained by myself. My connection was established with the sanction of Trotsky.

Vyshinsky: Your personal connection with whom?

Olberg: With the fascist secret police.

Vyshinsky: So it can be said that you yourself admit connection with the Gestapo?

Olberg: I do not deny this. In 1933 there began organized systematic connection between the German Trotskyites and the German fascist police. (1936 Trial, 87-88)

Gurevich

Khatskel Geselevich Gurevich was a Latvian by birth who had been a member of the Communist Party of Germany until 1933 and had then moved to Leningrad. Gurevich's activities and those of his wife Frida Grebe show how Trotskyist activity was interconnected with that of the German Gestapo.

> [Gurevich] Answer. I must also admit the following: In Leningrad Grebe told me that while she was under arrest in Leipzig she had been recruited by the Gestapo and she had agreed to work with the Gestapo.... Grebe received the assignment of conducting military espionage within the USSR for the Germans. (PiLT2, 288)

Frida Grebe knew that I was in contact with the Trotskyist organization in Berlin and Leipzig, knew about my contacts with Lev Sedov, and also knew that I and Mikhail Bykhovski had an assignment from the Trotskyist organization to prepare and carry out inside the Soviet Union terrorist acts against the leaders of the Party.

> Yes, I have to admit that in connection with the confessions of my wife Frida Grebe in Leipzig, at the beginning of June one of the officials of the Gestapo interrogated me about my Trotskyist activity and contacts in Germany. During this interrogation I admitted that I was a member of a Trotskyist organization and was connected in my activity with Sedov, Ol'berg, Fridman, Bykhovski and others, and that I had been assigned by the organization to emigrate to the USSR to prepare terrorist acts against the leaders of the Party.
>
> I also asked them to release me from custody so that I would be free to leave for the USSR. The Gestapo official said that my liberation might compromise me in the eyes of the Soviet colony and the CPG, and so I would be transferred to the USSR by convoy. On June 22, 1933, I was transferred to the USSR ...
>
> I have already confessed about the persons with whom Grebe, by assignment of the Gestapo, was in contact.
>
> Through Grebe in connection with the assignments I had received I also transmitted for the Gestapo information about the preparation by the Trotskyist organization in Leningrad of a terrorist act against Zhdanov.
>
> Grebe's last meeting that I know of with Fridrich, a Gestapo courier, was in March 1936 ... (289)

Gurevich confessed that he had informed a known German spy about his Trotskyist activities so that they would work together.

> I have to admit that Mikhail Sukhanov, who had been drawn into espionage for the Germans by Grebe in 1935, was informed in 1936 by me about the existence of the Trotskyist terrorist organization. I considered that the risk of doing this for me was minimal

since Sukhanov, as a spy, was completely in our hands and if he gave me up to the authorities it would be the inevitable end for him.

During one of Sukhanov's trips from Gatchina to me in Leningrad in January 1936 I, in Grebe's absence, told him that I was a member of a Trotskyist organization and had come to the USSR on assignment from Sedov.

(290)

Gurevich worked with both the Gestapo and the clandestine Trotskyist organization within the USSR. He was also in direct touch with Sedov. In this interrogation he does not explicitly state that Sedov had approved his collaboration with the Gestapo. But we can infer it. Since Gurevich's loyalty was to Trotsky he would no doubt have informed Sedov, as well as his fellow Trotskyists, about his Gestapo collaboration.

The January 1937 Trial: Piatakov, Radek, Sokol'nikov, Shestov

In the January 1937 Trial defendants Piatakov, Radek, and Shestov all testified to having been given explicit instructions by Trotsky himself concerning collaboration by either Germany or Japan. We'll briefly review that here.

Piatakov

> The espionage activities of the Trotskyites on behalf of the German intelligence service were covered up in a number of cases by their connections with certain German firms.
>
> The investigation in the present case has established that an agreement was concluded between *L. Trotsky* and certain German firms by virtue of which these firms financed the Trotskyites from a fund formed by raising the price of goods imported into the U.S.S.R. from Germany.

On this point the accused *Pyatakov*, referring to his conversation with *Trotsky's* son, *L. L. Sedov*, now in emigration, testified:

> . . . *Sedov* conveyed to me *Trotsky's* instructions to try and place as many orders as possible with the firms Demag and Borsig, with whose representatives *Trotsky* has connections.
>
> "You, added *Sedov*, will have to pay higher prices, but this money will go for our work." (Vol. I, p. 227) (*1937 Trial*, 15-16)
>
> . . .
>
> 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. (26-27)
>
> . . . I recall that Trotsky said in this directive that without the necessary support from foreign states, a government of the *bloc* could neither come to power nor hold power. It was therefore a question of arriving at the necessary preliminary agreement with the most aggressive foreign states, like Germany and Japan, and that he, Trotsky, on his part had already taken the necessary steps in establishing contacts both with the Japanese and the German governments. (53)
>
> . . . In connection with the international question Trotsky very emphatically insisted on the neces-

> sity of preparing diversionist cadres. He rebuked us for not engaging energetically enough in diversive, wrecking[6] and terrorist activities.
>
> He told me that he had come to an absolutely definite agreement with the fascist German government and with the Japanese government that they would adopt a favourable attitude in the event of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite *bloc* coming to power. But, he added, it went without saying that such a favourable attitude was not due to any particular love these governments cherished for the Trotskyite-Zinovievite *bloc*. It simply proceeded from the real interests of the fascist governments and from what we had promised to do for them if we came to power. (63-64)
>
> . . .
>
> *Pyatakov*: Here I must first make one explanation. Trotsky again said that from this standpoint, too, from the standpoint of the negotiations he was conducting and of what he had already achieved, it was extremely important to build up an active, concrete and real force. He then told me that he had conducted rather lengthy negotiations with the Vice-Chairman of the German National-Socialist Party – Hess. It is true I cannot say whether there is an agreement signed by him, or whether there is only an understanding, but Trotsky put it to me as though an agreement existed, one which it is true still had to be given definite shape by certain other persons, of whom I shall speak *in camera*. (64)

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[6] For the word "wrecking" it is best to substitute "sabotage." "Wrecking" is a clumsy translation that makes the original sound forced. The Russian word is *вредительство*, from "vred" = "harm."

. . .

First, the German fascists promise to adopt a favourable attitude towards the Trotskyite-Zinovievite *bloc* and to support it if it comes to power, either in time of war, or before a war, should it succeed in doing so. But in return the fascists are to receive the following compensation: a general favourable attitude towards German interest and towards the German government on all questions of international policy; certain territorial concessions would have to be made, and these territorial concessions have been defined – in particular, mention was made of territorial concessions in a veiled form which were called "not resisting Ukrainian national-bourgeois forces in the event of their self-determination."

Vyshinsky: What does that mean?

Pyatakov: It means in a veiled form what Radek spoke about here: should the Germans set up their Ukrainian government, ruling the Ukraine not through their German Governor-General but perhaps through a hetman – at any rate, should the Germans "self-determine" the Ukraine – the Trotskyist-Zinovievite *bloc* will not oppose it. Actually, this meant the beginning of the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. (64) . . .

Vyshinsky: And what about diversive acts in case of war?

Pyatakov: That was the last point . . . In the event of military attack the destructive forces of the Trotskyite organizations which would act within the country must be co-ordinated with the forces from without acting under the guidance of German fascism. The diversive and sabotage activity which

> is being conducted by the Trotskyite-Zinovievite organization within the Soviet Union must be carried out under the instructions of Trotsky, which are to be agreed upon with the German General Staff. (65)

This statement of Piatakov's is confirmed in Marshal Budennyi's letter to Marshal Voroshilov, and in Marshal Tukhachevsky's confession. We have studied both documents in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams.'*

> *Radek*: . . . The third point that emerged from Trotsky's conversation with Pyatakov was that Germany demanded complete freedom of action for the advance of Germany to the Balkan and Danube countries. This is also a very important fact.
>
> *Vyshinsky* (To Pyatakov): Did you say that? Do you confirm that?
>
> *Pyatakov:* Yes. Radek is relating it very exactly. It is all quite true. (445)

Assessing this Evidence

Piatakov testified at length that he had personally spoken to Trotsky and received letters from him concerning the latter's agreements with both Germany and Japan. Likewise Radek said that Trotsky had discussed his (Trotsky's) agreements with both Germany and Japan in letters to him.

Getty discovered that Trotsky had sent letters to Radek, Sokol'nikov, Preobrazhensky, "and others" in 1932. Shestov said that he had received Trotsky's instructions through a face-to-face talk with Sedov.

Piatakov claimed Sedov had told him to order through German firms that would "kick back" funds to Trotsky. American engineer John Littlepage read this passage in the trial transcript and wrote that he found it credible. Littlepage claimed that in Berlin in 1931 he had learned of fraudulent orders for useless mining equipment

being made by Russian émigrés acting for Soviet companies. He said that if Piatakov had made such orders the German companies would not have found it unusual, so Piatakov's story did not seem at all farfetched to him.[7]

The passage below from Littlepage[38] is also quoted in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* Part One, Chapter Eight. There we cited it in verifying Moscow Trial testimony. We are citing it again here for the reader's convenience and to emphasize how Littlepage dramatically confirms Piatakov's testimony that Trotsky had conspired with German firms for the purposes of espionage and sabotage.

> 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 round Piatakoff bad 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.

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[7] John D. Littlepage with Demaree Bess, *In Search of Soviet Gold*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1938, pp. 102-3. According to the late Prof. John N. Hazard of Columbia University, Littlepage was an anticommunist but basically apolitical engineer who had no reason to lie to make the Soviet charges "look good." As a student of Soviet law Hazard stayed with the Littlepage family in Moscow in the mid-1930s. (Interview of Professor John N. Hazard at Columbia University by Grover Furr, April 1981)

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 be, 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 at 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 would give commissions to Sedoff. But I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter that Russian emigres 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 emigres.

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.

In *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* we discuss Littlepage's memoir and how it confirms the testimony of Piatakov and other defendants at the second Moscow Trial of January 1937 concerning the special arrangements made by Trotsky and Sedov through Piatakov with certain German firms.

Radek

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. He said (speaking German): "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 told him that the 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 **unrealist** politicians in the U.S.S.R.: 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. (108-109)

. . .

Radek: ... Several months later, approximately, November 1935, at one of the regular diplomatic receptions, the military representative of that country. . .

> The President [Presiding officer of the court]: 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[8] 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. (444)

We have put the word "realist" in boldface because this same expression was used by a Japanese agent in conversation with Nikolai Ustrialov. Ustrialov recognized that it referred to the "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites." We discuss this issue in more detail in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'.*

> *Radek:* As regards Japan, we were told she must not only be given Sakhalin oil but be guaranteed oil in the event of a war with the U.S.A. It was stated that no obstacles must be raised to the conquest of China by Japanese imperialism.

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[8] In 1922 Soviet Russia and Germany signed a treaty at Rapallo that provided for economic and later agreed to secret military collaboration.

Vyshinsky: And as regards the Danube countries?

Radek: As regards the Danube and Balkan countries, Trotsky said in his letter that German fascism was expanding and we should do nothing to prevent this. The point was, of course, to sever any of our relations with Czechoslovakia which would have contributed to the defense of that country. (115-116)

. . .

And, finally, after receiving Trotsky's directives in 1934, I sent him the reply of the centre, and added in my own name that I agreed that the ground should be sounded, but that he should not bind himself, because the situation might change. I suggested that the negotiations should be conducted by Putna,[9] who had connections with leading Japanese and German military circles. And Trotsky replied: "We shall not bind ourselves without your knowledge, we shall make no decisions." For a whole year he was silent. And at the end of that year he confronted us with the accomplished fact of his agreement. You will understand that it was not any virtue on my part that I rebelled against this. But it is a fact for you to understand. (545)

And, finally, when Pyatakov returned from abroad, he casually remarked when speaking of the conversation with Trotsky that Trotsky had told him that cadres of people were being formed who had not been corrupted by the Stalin leadership. But when I read about Olberg and asked others whether they had known of the existence of Olberg, and none of them had heard

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[9] Corps Commander Vitovt Kazimirovich Putna was the Soviet military attaché to Great Britain when he was named by one or more defendants at the August 1936 Moscow Trial, whereupon he was recalled and arrested. In 1937 he confessed to conspiring with other military leaders and was tried and executed in what has become known as the "Tukhachevsky Affair."

> about him, it became clear to me that in addition to the cadres who had passed through his school, Trotsky was organizing agents who had passed through the school of German fascism. (548)

Evaluating This Evidence: Pavliukov's Book

In 2007 Russian researcher Aleksei Pavliukov published the fullest account to date of Nikolai Ezhov's career.10 This book, and Ezhov's career and conspiracies, are of great importance to any accurate understanding of the events of the late 1930s. For our present more limited purposes it is important because Pavliukov was accorded privileged access to certain unpublished materials relating to these conspiracies from the investigative files.

Among those materials were some dealing with the second Moscow Trial. Here is Pavliukov's discussion of the part of a confession by Radek dated October 20, 1936 in which Radek discusses Trotsky's relations with Germany and their significance:

> Radek reported that Trotsky, who had supposedly established firm contacts with German authorities, let them know that after its coming to power the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc was ready to make significant concessions in relation to Germany. This would be expressed in profitable conditions for the export of German goods to the USSR, in a reduction of prices for Soviet goods exported to Germany, in the permission of German capital to exploit the natural riches of the country, and also in several territorial concessions. (Pavliukov 236)

This corresponds with what Radek testified during the January 1937 Moscow Trial. Had the pretrial investigation materials to which Pavliukov was made privy, but which were never intended

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10 Aleksei Pavliukov, *Ezhov. Biografia*. Moscow: Zakharov, 2007.

to be made public, failed to confirm the trial testimony, we would have reason to doubt that testimony and suspect some "stage-managing" at the trial. But here the opposite is the case, as it confirms Radek's trial testimony. The existence of such pretrial investigative material, along with the confessions during trial, argues against any claim that the Trial was "stage-managed."

In the following passage Pavliukov quotes some words of Radek's directly:

> In the event of war between Germany and the Soviet Union upon which, according to Radek's words, Trotsky laid great hopes, "the Trotskyist commanders could even use certain individual defeats in battle as proof of the supposedly incorrect policy of the Central Committee of the AUCP(b) and in general of the senselessness and ruinous nature of the given war ... Using such failures and the exhaustion of the Red Army soldiers, they might even call upon them to abandon the front and turn their weapons against the government. That might give the German Army the possibility of occupying the abandoned areas and create a real threat of a crushing defeat of the whole front." Under these conditions the conspirators, relying upon those parts of the Army commanded by the Trotskyist commanders, might obtain a real chance to carry out a seizure of power in the country. (Pavliukov, 236-7)

This passage is congruent with the testimony of some of the military figures who asserted that they were in collaboration with both Trotsky and the Germans. We will examine that testimony below. It is also broadly consistent with what Piatakov testified at the January 1937 trial (see above).

Pavliukov also summarizes a confession of Radek's in the archives – dated two days later, December 22, 1936 – that concerns Trotsky:

The ultimate completion of the story with Trotsky's sellout of his former country occurred in Radek's confession of December 22, 1936. "As it turned out," the supposed meeting between Pyatakov and Trotsky in Norway was caused by the necessity to discuss a letter that had been received the evening before from Trotsky, in which the latter set forth his plans on the questions of the activity of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist bloc on foreign matters.

This letter, according to Radek, pointed out the desirability of the seizure of power even before the start of the impending war, and for this it would be essential to activate terrorist activity against the leaders of the Soviet government. For the normalization of relations with Germany it was considered expedient to agree to permit Germany to take part in the exploitation of areas of useful ores on the territory of the USSR and to guarantee the provision of foodstuffs and fats at less than world prices. As for Japan, the letter supposedly said that it would be necessary to give it access to Sakhalin oil, and to guarantee additional access to oil in the event of war with America, and also to permit it access to the exploitation of Soviet gold-producing areas. Besides that it followed that they ought not to hinder the German seizure of the Danubian and Balkan countries and not to interfere with Japan's seizure of China.

If they did not succeed in taking power before the war this goal might be attainable, in Trotsky's opinion (in Radek's exposition), as a result of a military defeat of the USSR, for which it was essential to energetically prepare. Active sabotage activities before and during the war would, besides weakening the defensive potential of the Soviet Union, demonstrate the real strength of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist bloc and facilitate postwar negotiations with Germany, which was

not of small importance, since in the event the conspirators came to power as a result of a crushing defeat of the USSR, it would not be possible to manage with the concessions of peacetime. In that case they would have to yield to the Germans obligations for the purchase of German goods for a long period of time, etc. In order that this scheme, attributed to the professional revolutionary Trotsky, would not look altogether too clumsy, Radek supplied it with arguments that Trotsky supposedly relied upon in developing all these defeatist plans. Afterwards, as a result of the strengthening of Germany and Japan (although at the expense of the USSR), would begin the unavoidable war between the imperialist powers, as it was supposedly set forth in Trotsky's letter, it could be possible to go once again on the counter-offensive, since the consequences of this war would facilitate the reappearance in the world of a new revolutionary situation.

This is the message supposedly received by Radek at the end of 1935 that stimulated Pyatakov to set out as soon as he could to consult with Trotsky in person. Radek confirmed Pyatakov's confessions about this meeting and filled them out with new details that Pyatakov had supposedly shared with him after his return to Moscow. It turned out that Trotsky had promised the Germans that during war between Germany and the USSR the Trotskyist commanders at the front would act according to the direct orders of the German General Staff, and after the war the new government would compensate Germany for part of its military expenses by paying with goods that were essential for its military industries.

Radek stated that Trotsky was also negotiating with Britain and France – still Pavliukov:

> At the same time Trotsky strove to avoid too great a dependence on Germany and Japan and was supposedly carrying on negotiations with the English and French too. As a result of the meetings that had taken place with representatives of Germany, England and France an agreement had been drafted that foresaw that, in the event the Trotskyists came to power, England and France would also not lose by it, to which Germany graciously acceded. The French were promised a benevolent regard to their attempts to obtain the return of their prerevolutionary debts to Russia and their pretensions to the metallurgical industry of the Donbas, and the English – consideration of their interests in the Caucasus.

In his one pretrial interrogation published in *PiLT2* Sokol'nikov gives details about his negotiations on the bloc's behalf with representatives of Britain and France. We will discuss this interrogation in volume three.

Radek concluded:

> After the war, in accordance with the plans attributed to Trotsky, there would be established in the Soviet Union the same kind of social-economic system as in the other countries of Europe and, of course, the Comintern would be disbanded. (Pavliukov 239-240)

This fully corresponds with some recently-declassified texts from the former NKVD archive in Moscow that confirm and give more detail about these matters.

Pavliukov and the 1937 Trial Transcript Compared

This summary of Radek's confession of December 22, 1936, is consistent with Radek's testimony at the January 1937 trial. Vyshinskii read a brief quotation from this very confession in his opening statement at the trial:

For example, the accused *Radek*, confirming *Pyatakov's* testimony, testified during examination on December 22, 1936, that one of the points of the agreement reached between *Trotsky* and the representatives of the German National-Socialist Party was the obligation...

> "... during Germany's war against the U.S.S.R. . . . to adopt a defeatist position, to intensify diversive activities, particularly in enterprises of military importance ... to act on *Trotsky's* instructions agreed upon with the German General Staff." (Vol. V, p. 152) (1937 Trial, 10-11)

Pavliukov's summary of Radek's confession also contains some details that did not come out at the trial. For instance, according to the published trial transcript Radek did not accuse Trotsky during the Trial of planning to accommodate the powerful imperialist countries by dissolving or banishing the Comintern.

In this unpublished confession Radek stresses that "Trotskyist military commanders" would be working directly with the German general staff to take advantage of defeat in war with Germany. According to the transcript Radek said nothing about this at the trial. It is, however, confirmed in Marshal Budennyi's letter to Marshal Voroshilov concerning the trial of Tukhachevsky and other military commanders. We have studied this letter in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* and published the text in the documentary appendix to that book.

Shestov

Aleksei Aleksandrovich Shestov was to be a major defendant in the second Moscow Trial of January 1937. Shestov was a mining engineer and former Party member who had been expelled as a Trotskyist.

The following passages are from Shestov's trial testimony:

During my meeting with Sedov I asked him what our leader, Trotsky, thought, what were the specific tasks he placed before us Trotskyites. Sedov began by saying that it was no use sitting and whistling for fair weather; we must proceed with all forces and means at our disposal to an active policy of discrediting Stalin's leadership and Stalin's policy.

Further, Sedov said that his father held that the only correct way, a difficult one but a sure one, was forcibly to remove Stalin and the leaders of the government by means of terrorism. . . .

Seeing that I was being influenced by his words, he switched the conversation to a new subject. He asked me whether I knew any of the directors of German firms, Dehlmann in particular. I told him that I remembered such a name, that he was a director of the firm of Fröhlich-Klüpfel-Dehlmann. This firm was rendering technical assistance, under a contract, in sinking mines in the Kuzbas. Sedov advised me to get in touch with that firm and make the acquaintance of Herr Dehlmann.

I asked him why I should get in touch with him. He said that this firm was of help in sending mail to the Soviet Union. I then said: "Are you advising me to make a deal with the firm?" He said: "What's terrible about that? You must understand that if they are doing us a favour why should not we do them a favour and furnish them with certain information."

...

I said: "You are simply proposing that I should become a spy." He shrugged his shoulders and said: "It is absurd to use words like that. In a fight it is unreasonable to be as squeamish as that. . . ." I met Smirnov about the middle of July and he asked me bluntly:

> "Well, how is your mood?" I told him that I had no personal mood, but I did as our leader Trotsky taught us – stand at attention and wait for orders. . . . I detained him and asked: "But Ivan Nikitich, Sedov ordered me to establish connections with the firm of Fröhlich-Klüpfel-Dehlmann . . . that was engaged in espionage and diversive work in the Kuzbas. In that case, I said, 'I will be a spy and a diversionist.'" To this he replied: "Stop slinging big words like 'spy' and 'diversionist' about. . . ." He said: "What do you find terrible in enlisting German diversionists for this work? . . ." He insisted that there was no other way. After this conversation I consented to establish connection with this firm. (235-236)

Here Shestov is very explicit that Sedov and I.N. Smirnov, who headed the clandestine Trotskyist organization within the USSR and was one of the major defendants at the first Moscow Trial of August 1936, wanted him to collaborate with German firms.

Pretrial Interrogation of Shestov

We now have two pretrial interrogations of Shestov, from October 14 and October 16, 1936. (PiLT2 239-339; 339-349) In his pretrial confessions Shestov explained how Trotsky was connected to German firms through his son Leon Sedov.

> Q: With which German firms did you deal?
>
> A: "Siemens-Schuckert," "AEG," "Freilich-Klüpfel-Deilman," "Borsig."
>
> Q: And with which firms did you have contact in your counterrevolutionary espionage work?
>
> A: Only with the firm "Freilich-Klüpfel-Deilman."... I categorically assert that I was in contact only with "Freilich-Klüpfel-Deilman" with which I was in contact, as I have already confessed, by direct orders from Sedov and Smirnov.

Q: ... L. Sedov and I. Smirnov explained to you the necessity of establishing contact in your work with German agents. You contacted the Deilman firm. You travelled to Essen especially for a meeting with them. Is that correct?

A: Right.

...

Q: Did this meeting take place already after you have spoken with Sedov and Smirnov?

A: Yes, I had already received Sedov's and Smirnov's assignment to contact this firm.

Q: What did you talk about with Deilman and Koch?

A: There were no talks about espionage work. We only arranged my meeting in Essen.

We agreed on the day I would fly in. On the advice of Deilman and Koch I was to stay at a hotel next to the building of the technical office of the firm.

Q: Give a detailed account of this meeting.

A: At the end of June or the beginning of July on the day we had agreed I arrived in Essen and checked in at the hotel indicated to me by Deilman.

On the second day, during the daytime, Deilman, Koch, and the director of the Essen technical office (I do not remember his name) came to see me. We had a business meeting, arranged that I would inspect 3-4 mines and a factory in Wuppertal, and in the evening I would go to see them in the technical office to familiarize myself with the plan of the Shcheglovsk mine that the firm had developed.

In the evening I went to the office. After I had been introduced to the plan for the Shcheglovsk mine I began a conversation concerning Sedov's assignment.

Q: How did you pose this question?

A: I asked them whether they knew Sedov and received an affirmative answer. I asked them whether there had been any instructions from him to discuss some questions with me. They answered in the affirmative and Deilman, smiling, stated: "To speak plainly, we know each other, and let's get straight to the business."

The essence of the conversation: the firm is interested in economic information, the perspectives and the factual plan for the development of coal, chemicals, and metallurgy in the Kuzbas. The firm has its own man, Stroilov, in Novosibirsk. He knows their men in the Kuzbas. According to the wishes of our organization we can use their men to organize sabotage (diversionnykh aktov). The firm can increase the quality and quantity of its people as needed.

To my question about how the firm will repay our organization for the economic information Deilman said, and Koch translated, that:

1. Their people will work to carry out such tasks as our organization gives them. They know about the tasks of our organization from Mr. Lev Sedov, who is a great friend of theirs. Their people will act in the most determined manner.

2. The firm assumes the responsibility of maintaining the contact of our organization with our foreign bureau by the avenues we know about. We can maintain the same contact in Siberia; the means of contact through Stroilov and their people, when they travel on any occasion out of the USSR and back.

Here Deilman told me that any letter addressed to him with the note on it "for my boss" would be infallibly passed on to Sedov.

As a result of our exchange of views we arrived at the conclusion:

First: whenever necessary letters from Siberia to Sedov would be addressed to Deilman with the note "give to my boss."

Second: Stroilov would concentrate all diversionist (sabotage) and espionage work in his hands, since he would be working in the management of Kuzbasstroi. He knows the German language well and people from Germany will go to him.

Third: The Trotskyist organization will cooperate with the Germans in their diversionist (sabotage) work.

Fourth: There is no doubt that once the Trotskyist organization has attained power it will not forget Deilman and will give to it a new order for the planning of new mines and for carrying the plan out. (331-332)

...

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I asked Deilman whether his people were reliable enough and whether they would give us up if they were caught. Deilman answered me: "We Germans are the kind of people that will die without saying a word about the fact that they are spies and are working with Trotskyists."

... I assured Deilman that when the Trotskyists came to power the interests of their firm will certainly not be forgotten.

Q: ... You have yourself confessed that the Trotskyist organization needed money.

A: I repeat that I personally did not take any money from the German firms, but I must admit that if Sedov and Smirnov had given me such an assignment I would have certainly carried it out.

Q: Did you interest yourself in the sources of money received by the Trotskyists abroad?

A: Unquestionably the Trotskyist organization abroad needed money. But it was not appropriate for me to ask Sedov, Smirnov, or Piatakov where the money was obtained. I can tell the investigation about one incident that may disclose one of the sources that the Trotskyist organization abroad used to obtain money.

From talks in Berlin with individual comrades: with Zubkov of Soiuzugol', Donbass; with Nedrasov of Soiuzzoloto, with an engineer from Solikamsk who was working under the command of the leadership of Glavkhim whose name I don't remember but whose face I recognize well, I found out that German firms such as "Borsig" and "Demag" for some reason enjoyed special protection by Piatakov...

Q: After the meeting in Essen did you meet with Deilman and Koch again in Germany?

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A: No, I didn't. I have already confessed that after returning from England, besides my meeting with Sedov in Berlin and receiving letters from him for Piatakov and Muralov I had no more meetings with Deilman and the Trotskyists.

Q: When you gave to Piatakov in Moscow the letters from Sedov did you speak with him about the assignments of Deilman and Koch?

A: No, I didn't.

...

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Q: Have you confessed everything about the use of German specialists for counterrevolutionary work?

A: No, not everything. I used Floren for sending information of the Siberian center to Sedov and receiving instructions from him. This was in 1932 when Floren was working in Prokop'evsk.

Q: How did you do this?

A: During the winter, at the end of 1932, knowing about Floren's impending trip to Germany on holiday, I proposed to Muralov to use this occasion to send information to Lev Sedov. ... He agreed to the sending of a letter to Sedov via Floren and offered to return in a few days with the letter.... In this same letter Muralov asked Sedov for instructions on our position during war with capitalist countries and in particular with Germany....

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Floren went to Germany during the winter at the end of 1932. He carried out my assignment and when he returned in the spring of the same year he brought a reply from Sedov to Muralov. I gave this letter to Muralov in the spring of 1933.

Q: Do you know the contents of this answer of Sedov's?

A: Muralov decoded the letter himself. He told me as follows: The center abroad is satisfied with the Siberian Trotskyist work. The Trotskyists abroad have had successes. Contacts with socialist groups are being established. There has been success in breaking off from foreign companies, especially French ones, separate groups that are now working under Trotsky's direction. We need to carry out work in the Kuzbass along the same lines as this. On the question of the position of the Trotskyist organization during the period of a war between the Soviet Union and Germany, Sedov instructed Muralov that we must unconditionally take a defeatist position.

Stroilov

Mikhail Stepanovich Stroilov was a mining engineer who had been recruited by the Germans to do espionage work in the Kuzbass mining area. Stroilov was also a defendant in the January 1937 Moscow Trial. Stroilov was not a Trotskyist. Therefore in his testimony at trial Stroilov did not connect Trotsky or Sedov directly with Germans or Germany.

We do have two pretrial confessions of Stroilov's, dated October 16 and October 20, 1936. (PiLT2 349-360; 360-365) In them he relates how he worked with Trotskyists and Germans.

Q: Does that mean that the Trotskyists contacted you on their own initiative?

A: Not entirely on their own initiative. In the ensuing talks with the Trotskyists I discovered that they had a parallel line of contact directly with the Germans.

Q: Tell us how the Trotskyists established contact with you concerning subversive work.

A: Until my business trip abroad I had only a weak understanding of Trotskyists. From newspapers I knew of the existence of various opposition groups and

knew about Trotsky's exile abroad, but I had no particular interest in these matters. Once I was abroad I understood from talks with the Germans that the Trotskyists were carrying out counterrevolutionary work in the USSR and that the Germans regarded this work sympathetically.

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...Shestov informed me that the Trotskyist organization set itself the task of destruction in the Kuzbass in order to retard its development.

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... Sommereger proposed that I put Shebesto in contact with the Trotskyist Shestov, who would be obliged to render practical assistance to the German saboteurs on the spot.

Stroilov's testimony corroborates Shestov's in confirming that the Trotskyists worked closely with the Germans.

Andreev

Vladimir Mikhailovich Andreev was a young mining engineer who was recruited to a fascist organization while working in the Kuzbass. He was not a defendant in any of the Moscow Trials. We have two interrogations of him dated October 5 and 21, 1936. (PiLT2, 368-373; 373-380)

Andreev testified about the connection between the Trotskyists and the pro-German fascist group of which he was a member. He had been recruited to this group by a certain Peshekhonov (no first name or patronymic is given in this source). Peshekhonov had

been involved in the Shakhty conspiracy some years earlier and was an avid fascist.[11]

Andreev testified about three members of the fascist group he was in, who turned out to be Trotskyists.

> Q: What did Peshekhonov tell you about them?
>
> A: He said that it would be harder now for us to do our work since our counterrevolutionary group had been dealt a serious blow. I asked: What blow? Peshekhonov replied that during my vacation Noskov and Shubin were no longer among the participants of our group, and Kurov had to temporarily stop any practical involvement in counterrevolutionary work since he was also under threat. **I was astonished at hearing these names: Noskov, Shubin, and Kurov I knew as members of the Party. I said to Peshekhonov: "But aren't they communists?" Peshekhonov answered me: "They are not communists, but Trotskyists. Communists and Trotskyists are as different from one another as day is from night."** I still did not really understand Peshekhonov and asked him to explain.
>
> Then Peshekhonov told me that the Trotskyists in our organization play an especially active role. In their hostility and revenge against the Party they stop at nothing and are in contact with our organization through Stroilov and carry out together with us active work against the Party and construction in the country. Then he told me that during my vacation (I was on vacation from the beginning of June until the end of August) the Trotskyist activities of Noskov and Shubin

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[11] An engineer named Peshekhonov is mentioned in the published materials of the Shakhty affair. See *Shakhtinskii protsess 1928 g. Podgotovka, provedenie, Itogi. Kn. 1.* Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2011, 400, 407, 408.

had been discovered. Both had been expelled from the Party and removed from work. Kurov was also threatened and for self-protection had to temporarily withdraw from active counterrevolutionary work.

But Peshekhonov warned me that this was just a temporary interruption caused by the Moscow Trial of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist center. Now the Trotskyists, as Peshekhonov said, would come to us even more hostile and more actively. Therefore we had to hold to our course of relying on them especially for attracting to our work.

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Q: Do you admit that in carrying out your counter-revolutionary tasks in conjunction with the fascists and Trotskyists, in the method of carrying them out you stopped at nothing, including sending workers to their deaths and putting whole mine shafts in danger of being blown up?

A: Yes, I am compelled to admit this.

Q: Was the explosion of September 23, as a result of which 9 miners were killed and 15 were seriously injured, the work of your fascist-Trotskyist group?

A: Yes, it's true, September 23 was the work of our fascist-Trotskyist group.

Archival Documents and the 1937 Trial Transcript:

Sokol'nikov and Radek Concerning Trotsky's Relations with Japan and Germany

Sokol'nikov

In the course of his indictment at the start of the 1937 Trial Soviet Prosecutor Andrei Vyshinskii said that in pretrial confessions

Sokol'nikov had testified that a foreign diplomat had informed him of Trotsky's contact with his country:

> The accused *Sokolnikov* also admitted that, taking advantage of his position as Assistant People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, he, on *L.D. Trotsky's* instructions, carried on secret negotiations with representatives of a certain foreign state.

The accused *Sokolnikov* testified:

> "At the conclusion of an official conversation held in my office, when Mr. --- and the secretary of the embassy were about to leave, Mr. --- stopped awhile.
>
> "At that time both interpreters had already left my office. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Mr. ---, while I escorted him to the door, exchanged a few sentences with me. Mr. --- asked me: 'Are you aware that Mr. *Trotsky* has made certain proposals to my government?'
>
> "I replied: 'Yes, I have been informed of this.'
>
> "Mr. --- asked: 'How do you appraise these proposals?'
>
> "I replied: 'I think the proposals are quite serious.'
>
> "Then Mr. --- asked: 'Is this only your personal opinion?'
>
> "I replied: 'No, this is also the opinion of my friends.'"
>
> (Vol. VIII, pp. 235, 236)
> (1937 Trial, 9)

To this day not one of the many volumes of the preliminary investigative materials of this, of the other two Moscow Trials, and of

many other such proceedings, has ever been opened to researchers. But the investigative materials pertaining to this particular passage were published in 1989 and again in 1991 in a volume on the "rehabilitation" process.

Its content is important for our purposes. First, because it shows that these many volumes of preliminary investigation materials do exist (or did in 1989). Second, because this passage, quoted from those preliminary materials, show clearly that the country in question was Japan.

> . . . to the file was associated a copy of notes of a talk between G. Ia. Sokol'nikov, who was at that time the vice-commissar of Foreign Affairs, with the Japanese ambassador Ota of April 13, 1935, on the question of the petroleum, fishing, and anthracite concessions on Sakhalin [Island]. At the preliminary investigation and at the trial G. Ia. Sokol'nikov confirmed the fact of this talk and stated that after the talk he supposedly had a short conversation with Ota on the subject of L.D. Trotsky's proposals to the Japanese government. The contents of the conversation, as it is reflected in the transcript of the interrogation of G. Ia. Sokol'nikov of December 12, 1936, was as follows:
>
> *Sokol'nikov:* . . . when Ota and the secretary of the embassy were about to leave, Ota stopped awhile. At that time both interpreters had already left my office. Taking advantage of this opportunity Ota, while I escorted him to the door, exchanged a few sentences with me.
>
> *Question:* Please reproduce your conversation with Ota word for word, as far as possible.
>
> *Answer:* Ota asked me: "Are you aware that Mr. Trotsky has made certain proposals to my government?" I replied: "Yes, I have been informed of this." Ota asked: "How do you appraise these proposals?" I replied: "I think the proposals are quite serious." Then Ota

> asked: "Is this only your personal opinion?" I replied: "No, this is also the opinion of my friends." On this point our conversation ended.
>
> *Question:* Did Ota return to the question of contact between the bloc and the Japanese government after that?
>
> *Answer:* No. This conversation with Ota took place at the very end of my negotiations with him. Shortly after that I stopped working in the NKVD and did not meet with Ota again.[12]

We will discuss Sokol'nikov's talk with Japanese ambassador Tamekichi Ota in the next chapter. If Sokol'nikov had been forced to fabricate his testimony here, including the details of person and country, it's difficult to conceive of any reason he would have then been admonished to omit these details at trial. It's precisely these details, confined only to his pretrial testimony, that strongly suggest the statement was *not* a fabrication. The details in this pretrial testimony were never intended by the prosecution to see the light of day. The text of this part of Sokol'nikov's confession is strong corroborative evidence that both it and his testimony at the Moscow trial are truthful.

Confirmation of Trotsky's Contact with Japanese

In his "Statement" to Ezhov of December 19-20, 1936, made public in 2015, Iurii Piatakov mentions Japanese ambassador Ota's contact with Sokol'nikov:

> Also, Sokol'nikov told me that he had a talk with the Japanese, with Ota, I think, from which it was also clear that Trotsky was carrying on negotiations with

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[12] *Reabilitatsiia. Politicheskie Protsessy 30-50-x godov*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 2001, pp. 228-9. Originally published in *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* No. 9 (1989), p. 45.

> representatives of the Japanese government. (LD 257)[13]

Piatakov made this remark in passing, without any emphasis. Sokol'nikov must have told him about this incident. It confirms Sokol'nikov's claim that Trotsky had been conspiring with the Japanese. We will examine other evidence of Trotsky's conspiring with the Japanese when we study Serov's report to the Molotov Commission.

Radek

The text of Radek's similar statement at a preliminary investigation has not been published, though it is briefly summarized on p. 229 in the *Reabilitatsia* volume, right after the quotation from Sokol'nikov we've just reviewed. But a version of that text was reprinted in a 2004 volume of NKVD materials sent to Stalin. It occurs in a part of the draft of Vyshinskii's opening statement at the 1937 Trial.[14] Though expurgated to remove the names of the German figures identified in the original interrogation (which is still secret) the name of the government – Germany, in this case – was left in the draft, while it was omitted in the Trial transcript (*1937 Trial*, 7-9).

In the following section:

> * the passages that are common to both versions of Vyshinsky's remarks are in normal type.
>
> * those passages that are only in the pretrial draft of Vyshinsky's remarks published in 2004, but are not in the Trial transcript, are in *italics*.
>
> * the passages that are only in the Trial transcript are in **bold**.

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[13] I have put this document online. See the note at the head of the Bibliography.

[14] Lubianka 1937-1938, 11-12.

The most important result of this textual analysis is this: the draft version published in 2004 contains more specific references to Germany and Japan, to German individuals, and to an outline of Trotsky's purported agreements with them.

> As testified by the accused Pyatakov, L. Trotsky, in his conversation with the accused in December 1935, informed him that as a result of these negotiations he had concluded an agreement with *the said leader of the National-Socialist Party* **HESS** on the following terms:
>
> "1) to guarantee a generally favourable attitude towards the German government and the necessary collaboration with it in the most important questions of an international character;
>
> "2) to agree to territorial concessions;
>
> "3) to permit German industrialists, in the form of concessions (or some other forms), to exploit enterprises in the U.S.S.R. which are essential as complements to German economy (iron ore, manganese, oil, gold, timber, etc., were meant);
>
> "4) to create in the U.S.S.R. favourable conditions for the activities of German private enterprises;
>
> *"5) in time of war to develop extensive diversive activities in enterprises of the war industry and at the front. These diversive activities are to be carried on under Trotsky's instructions, agreed upon with the German General Staff.*

These principles of the agreement, as Trotsky related, were finally elaborated and adopted during Trotsky's meeting with Hitler's deputy, Hess.

Likewise, said Trotsky, he had well-established connections with the *Japanese* government. (Vol. I, pp. 267, 268)

The nature of this agreement and the extent of the territorial concessions proposed were communicated by L. Trotsky in his letter to the accused Radek in December 1935.

> . . .

On this point the accused Radek, during examination on December 4, 1936, testified:

> ". . . Trotsky's assertion about his communication with the representatives of the --- government was not idle talk. I was able to convince myself of this from conversations I had had at diplomatic receptions in 1935-35 with the military attaché *Mr.* German General K., the naval attaché, if I am not mistaken, Mr. B *and* finally with the press-attaché of the German embassy, Mr. B, a very well informed representative of Germany.
>
> Both of them, in a cautious way, gave me to understand that the --- government was in communication with Trotsky."

And further:

> "I told Mr. K--- that it was absolutely useless expecting any concessions from the present government, but that the German 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." (Vol. V, pp. 119, 121)

We should note that even Vyshinsky's draft has been expurgated of some details. For example in the summary of Sokol'nikov's confession Ota's name is replaced by "O" in this draft, while in the

Trial transcript itself even this letter is omitted and we read "Mr. ---."

Hess's name *is* mentioned in the Trial transcript. Presumably this is because Hess was an official of the Nazi Party, not a member of the German government. The Soviets insisted upon making a distinction between the policies of the Soviet *government* that wanted good relations with capitalist countries in diplomacy, trade, etc., and the policies of the Bolshevik *Party* that pursued communist ends. It is logical that they would make a similar distinction in the case of Germany.

By analogy with Sokol'nikov's interrogation we may assume that all the names were present in the still-secret transcript of Radek's interrogation. Explicit identification of German and Japanese individuals is more frequent in the draft of Vyshinsky's remarks, yet Hess's name does get into the Trial transcript, though the word "Japan" is excised, as are the ranks and initials of the German officials and, in the last quotation, the word "German" itself. This appears to show considerable uncertainty within the Soviet government as to how much to reveal publicly. Perhaps they did not want to "burn their bridges" to the government and military of any of the Western countries.

Assessing This Evidence

We will have much more discussion of the testimony above, and of confirmatory testimony, in the chapter on Piatakov's Statement to Ezhov in volume three of this work.

As in the case of the Sokol'nikov passage, these differences between the various versions of the same testimony are hard to explain unless one assumes that the original testimony was genuine. It would be absurd to create multiple levels of *fake* confessions. But *real* confessions that were obtained in many interrogations over an extended time, then edited down in several versions of the indictment, and finally edited again in the final draft of the Trial transcript, would leave this kind of documentary trail.

Radek's and Sokol'nikov's interrogations were still in existence in 1989 when the excerpts from them were published. We have evidence that the texts of many other interrogations, as well as other vital investigative materials, still exist but are kept top secret in Russian archives. They probably have a great deal more evidence to support the existence of the conspiracies, including those with Trotsky, Germany, and Japan. Since the archives have been scoured for any evidence that could support the "rehabilitations," and thus the supposed innocence, of the defendants, it seems safe to assume that the material that is still secret tends to support the defendants' guilt.

Until recently very few such pretrial confession transcripts had been published – Bukharin's first confession, plus Frinovskii's, Ezhov's, Iagoda's, Enukidze's, Fel'dman's, and a few by defendants at the 1936 trials like Zinoviev and Kamenev. Now we have more: the several interrogation-confessions in the volume *Politbiuro i Lev Trotskii, T. 2* (PiLT2); Piatakov's Statement of December 19-20, 1936; plus some quotations from investigative materials in Ivan Serov's report to the Molotov Commission of June, 1956. All of these materials confirm the impression that they contain primary evidence of outstanding importance. We devote a separate chapter to each of the last two in the present volume. We will study more of the materials in PiLT2 in volume three.

Evidence

We have no evidence that the testimony in these confessions was extracted by threat or force – that is, was false. Why go to the trouble of having a suspect concoct a detailed confession, naming names, and then take out those names for the sake of a trial?

By far the most likely reason for omitting the names at trial is that they were genuine in the first place. Given the absence of any evidence that these confessions were false, and given the logical progression from more detail in the secret documents to the least detail in public ones, any objective student would conclude that we should consider these confessions genuine unless and until evidence to the contrary should be discovered.

But the practice among most scholars of this period of Soviet history is to do precisely the opposite. Any evidence that tends to support the theory that Trotsky or any of those accused of espionage, sabotage, conspiracy to overthrow the government, or treasonable contacts with foreign governments did in fact so conspire, is routinely dismissed. The evidence itself is not evaluated.

Such a procedure is incorrect. There is never any reason to "dismiss" – to refuse to consider – any evidence. All evidence needs to be evaluated on its own merits and in conjunction with the rest of the evidence available, as we have done here. The evidence is strong that Radek testified truthfully both in his pretrial interrogations and at the trial. That means either that Trotsky was involved with Germany and Japan or, at the least, that Trotsky told Radek he was.

The March 1938 Trial

Krestinskii

In this trial Nikolai Krestinskii testified that in 1922 he began collaborating for factional Trotskyist aims with the German General von Seeckt at Trotsky's behest. Krestinskii said that the clandestine Trotskyite organization performed some kind of espionage or intelligence services for the German General Staff in return for a considerable sum of money to further their factional work within the Bolshevik Party.

> KRESTINSKY: I began my illegal Trotskyite activities at the end of 1921, when on Trotsky's suggestion I consented to the formation of an illegal Trotskyite organization and to my joining its centre, which was to be made up of Trotsky, Pyatakov, Serebryakov, Preobrazhensky and myself, Krestinskii. Trotsky made this proposal to me immediately after the Tenth Congress. . . . (1938 Trial, 262)

A year later I committed a crime – I refer to the one I spoke about during the examination of the accused

Rosengoltz – the agreement I concluded on Trotsky's instructions with General Seeckt, with the Reichswehr in his person, about financing the Trotskyite organization in exchange for services of an espionage nature which we undertook in this connection to render the Reichswehr. . . . (262)

VYSHINSKY: Will you tell us how much money you received?

KRESTINSKY: Beginning with 1923 until 1930 we received annually 250,000 German marks in gold.

VYSHINSKY: This makes approximately two million gold marks altogether during these years?

KRESTINSKY: Yes, approximately two million gold marks. (265)

Krestinskii made a point of stressing that he had contacted von Seeckt as early as the previous year, 1921, but that his illegal, criminal contacts with von Seeckt dated only from 1922.

VYSHINSKY: Inasmuch as you are winding up the story of this period of your criminal activities, I want to get more precise information on one question. You said that in the winter of 1921-22 you evolved your calculations on the German Reichswehr.

KRESTINSKY: The plans to utilize the German Reichswehr for criminal Trotskyite purposes appeared in the spring of 1922.

VYSHINSKY: Did your Trotskyite organization maintain contact with Seeckt even before 1921?

KRESTINSKY: There was a contact with him of which I do not want to speak at an open session. It was a contact established by a member of our organization who at that time was not yet a member of our organization,

> and it was not a contact of a Trotskyite nature. (267-268)
>
> . . .
>
> VYSHINSKY: The question of money for Trotskyite purposes from the German Reichswehr – is that an official aspect or not?
>
> KRESTINSKY: This was the secret Trotskyite aspect, a criminal thing.
>
> VYSHINSKY: Which refers to 1921-22?
>
> KRESTINSKY: To 1922. (269)

It is hard to understand why Krestinskii would have insisted upon such precision over an insubstantial matter – whether his illegal Trotskyist activity began in 1921 or in 1922 -- unless he were telling the truth.

Krestinskii also claimed that he had met personally with Trotsky in Meran, Italy[15] in October 1933, where Trotsky told him that collaboration with Japan was also essential. Krestinskii said that Trotsky personally informed him that he was continuing to work personally with the Germans, and with the Japanese through Sokol'nikov.

> He undertook to carry on the negotiations with the Germans. As for the Japanese, of whom he spoke as a force with which it was also necessary to come to terms, he said that, for the time being, it was difficult for him to establish direct connections with them, that it would be necessary to carry on conversations with them in Moscow, that it was necessary in this connec-

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[15] The city is called "Meran" in German and Russian, and "Merano" in Italian. We use "Meran" here because this is the spelling in the English translation of the 1938 Trial transcript.

> tion to use Sokolnikov, who was working in the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and, as it happened, was in charge of eastern affairs. And inasmuch as this conversation would be held only with an official person, and the preliminary conversation would only be in the nature of soundings, it would be sufficient to confine ourselves at first to general statements to the effect that if a government of a bloc of the opposition groups assumed power in the Soviet Union, it would display a favourable attitude towards the Japanese and take into consideration the wishes of the Japanese during the discussion and settlement of the controversies existing between the Soviet government and the Japanese government. (277-278)

As we have seen, Sokol'nikov did outline his talk with Tamekichi Ota, the Japanese ambassador, who informed him about Trotsky's contact with the Japanese government.

Rozengol'ts

Rozengol'ts testified that he had contacted von Seeckt and Chief of the German General Staff Hasse in 1923 when ordered by Trotsky and for Trotskyist purposes.

> My espionage activities began as far back as 1923, when, on TROTSKY'S instructions, I handed various secret information to the Commander-in-Chief of the Reichswehr, SEECKT, and to the Chief of the German General Staff, HASSE. Subsequently, direct connections with me were established by the --- Ambassador in the U.S.S.R., Mr. N, to whom I periodically gave information of an espionage character. After Mr. N's departure I continued my espionage connections with the new Ambassador, Mr. N.[16] (Vol VI, p. 131 reverse) (9)

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[16] Probably Rudolf Nadolny, German ambassador to the Soviet Union 1933-1934.

Krestinskii too had confessed to meeting with German generals von Seeckt and Hasse.

> We came to an agreement with Generals SEECKT and HASSE to the effect that we would help the Reichswehr to create a number of espionage bases on the territory of the U.S.S.R. by permitting the unhindered entry of spies sent by the Reichswehr, and that we would supply the Reichswehr with espionage materials, i.e., to put it plainly, that we would be German spies. In return for this the Reichswehr undertook to pay us 250,000 marks per annum as a subsidy for counter-revolutionary Trotskyite work. . . . (*1938 Trial*, 9)

From March 1920 to October 1926 Hans von Seeckt was "Chef der Heeresleitung" – literally, "Chief of the Army Command" – in English terminology, Commander-in-Chief. General Otto Hasse was "Chef der Truppenamt" after 1922. During the period when Germany was pretending to adhere to the Treaty of Versailles "Truppenamt" was the code word for "Generalstab der Reichswehr" or German General Staff.[17] Both were strong proponents of German alliance with Russia.

Rozengol'ts insisted that this is when his conspiratorial work began – that is, that this contact was not work for the USSR, which had trade and military agreements with Weimar Germany at the time.

> VYSHINSKY: . . . So you, Rosengoltz, established connections with the German intelligence service already in 1923?
>
> ROSENGOLTZ: With Seeckt directly.
>
> VYSHINSKY: Do you draw a line between the two?

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[17] See https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truppenamt

ROSENGOLTZ: I am saying it merely for the sake of exactitude.

VYSHINSKY: So since 1923 you, accused Rosengoltz, began to supply espionage information to foreign states?

ROSENGOLTZ: That is right. (261)

Rozengol'ts' distinction here is correct: contact with the German General Staff is not the same as contact with German intelligence, even though espionage for both would be equally illegal. Here too it is hard to imagine why Rozengol'ts would have taken the trouble to be so precise unless he were telling the truth. Liars can feign precision, but in this case there seems to be no reason to fabricate this kind of distinction.

Rozengol'ts testified to working with both Germany and Japan on Trotsky's instructions.

> In addition to instructions I received from TROTSKY through KRESTINSKY and SEDOV to carry on sabotage activities in the sphere of foreign trade with the object of rendering direct assistance to Germany and Japan, the character of my sabotage activities was also determined by instructions I received from the Ambassadors in the U.S.S.R., Mr. N and Mr. N, connections with whom played an important part in this matter, as I had to be guided in my work by their definite instructions.
>
> After I had established contact with TUKHACHEVSKY and RYKOV, I informed the former through KRESTINSKY, and the latter I myself informed, of TROTSKY'S instructions regarding sabotage activities, and both approved of the work I had done.
>
> As a result of all this, sabotage activities in foreign trade proceeded mainly along the following three lines: first – economic assistance to Germany and Ja-

> pan at the expense of the U.S.S.R.; second – causing economic loss and damage to the U.S.S.R.; third – causing political damage to the U.S.S.R. (Vol. VI, p. 49) (15-16)

> ROSENGOLTZ: I shall enumerate the main points. Sedov also conveyed directions from Trotsky about the organization of terrorism, stating that at that period these instructions about terrorism should have no direct practical bearing on Krestinskii and myself from motives of secrecy, since special instructions were being given on this score to the terrorist organization of Ivan Nikitich Smirnov. In 1933 directions and instructions were received with regard to sabotage in the sphere of foreign trade. As Sedov had told me that Trotsky had an agreement with certain German circles, from this standpoint sabotage was of very essential importance to Trotsky for the maintenance of his prestige and the preservation of the agreement. The principal line in sabotage was to further the interests of Germany and Japan in the sphere of foreign trade. (246)

Rozengol'ts said that he met personally with Sedov in both 1933 and 1934.

> In so far as TROTSKY had an agreement with Germany and Japan, of which I had been informed (both during the negotiations – at my meeting with Sedov in 1933; and of the agreement that had been reached – at my meeting with him in 1934), I received corresponding instructions from TROTSKY, and my sabotage activities in the sphere of foreign trade served the same purpose. (Vol. VI, p. 48) (18)

Bessonov

Sergei Alekseevich Bessonov, a defendant at the third Moscow Trial, said that he had received a letter from Trotsky in 1934, and

also met Trotsky in Paris in that year. Here Trotsky urged him to pressure the Germans to come to some official agreement with the Opposition, saying:

> VYSHINSKY: What did you and Trotsky say about your underground Trotskyite tasks?
>
> BESSONOV: He imposed on his followers working in the diplomatic field the task of adopting the line of sabotaging official agreements in order to stimulate the interest of the Germans in unofficial agreements with opposition groups. "They will come to us yet," said Trotsky, referring to Hess and Rosenberg. He said that we must not be squeamish in this matter, and that we might be ensured real and important help from Hess and Rosenberg. He said we must not stop short at consenting to big cessions of territory. (63)

Rakovsky

We now have additional evidence concerning Khristian Georgievich Rakovsky's meeting with Japanese officials on Trotsky's behalf. We devote special study to this evidence in the chapter on Ivan Serov's report to the Molotov Commission. Here we will discuss Rakovsky's testimony at the March 1938 Moscow Trial.

Khristian Rakovsky testified that in September 1934 an important Japanese official had spoken to him directly concerning an agreement with the opposition.

> RAKOVSKY: ...In September 1934 I was sent to Tokyo at the head of the Soviet Red Cross Delegation to an international conference of Red Cross Societies, which was to take place there in October. The day after I arrived in Tokyo, I was stopped in the corridor of the Japanese Red Cross building by a certain prominent public man of Japan. I can mention his name.
>
> THE PRESIDENT: No, there is no need.

> RAKOVSKY: Very well, I will name him at the session in camera. He invited me to tea. I made his acquaintance. He held a position which had some relation to my mission – I want to say, not my mission as one who belonged to the opposition, but my governmental mission. I accepted his amiable invitation. During the conversation this person (here I omit various compliments, commonplaces, flattering remarks) said that the interests of the political trend to which I belonged in the U.S.S.R. and the interests of a certain government fully coincided, and that he personally welcomed my arrival in Tokyo because it would give him the opportunity to discuss certain questions concerning both sides, . . . (289-290)

Rakovsky then said that during 1935 and the first half of 1936 he had had five communications with Naida, a Japanese agent. Naida gave him to understand that the Japanese had relations with Trotsky. Rakovsky communicated with Trotsky about this.

> During the second and third meeting with the public man who headed a big public organization in Japan we established the nature of the information which I promised to supply to the agents of the Japanese intelligence service in Moscow and also the technique of transmitting this information. While still in Tokyo, I drew into this work Dr. Naida, secretary of the Red Cross Delegation, of whom I already knew that he was a member of the underground counter-revolutionary terrorist organization. I sent Dr. Naida with my card to the public man and he arranged with him as to how and with whom Dr. Naida was to meet in Moscow; it was he who acted as liaison agent between me and the Japanese intelligence service. In Tokyo I had yet another meeting, with a third person. . . . I was introduced to this third person by the second high personage. He asked me to take coffee with him – this was after dinner; we sat down at a table and began to talk.

> I shall not reproduce the whole conversation, and it is not necessary either; I shall give it to you in substance. He started the conversation by saying: "We are aware that you are a very close friend and adherent of Mr. Trotsky. I must ask you to write to him that a certain government is dissatisfied with his articles on the Chinese question and also with the behaviour of the Chinese Trotskyites. We have a right to expect a different line of conduct on the part of Mr. Trotsky. Mr. Trotsky ought to understand what is necessary for the certain government. There is no need to go into details, but it is clear that an incident provoked in China would be a desirable pretext for intervening in China." I wrote to Trotsky about all this. . . . (1938 Trial, 293-294)

Summary: Evidence from the Moscow Trials

In the first section of *Trotsky's 'Amalgams,'* volume one of this study, we carry out an exhaustive verification of the Moscow Trials testimony. On the basis of that study we concluded that the defendants' testimony at the Moscow Trials represents what the defendants themselves chose to say. This testimony is not the result of innocent men being forced to testify falsely against themselves and others according to some kind of script designed by the investigation or the prosecution. We refer the interested reader to that study.

Of the defendants at the three public Moscow Trials eight men claimed to have heard directly from either Trotsky or his son Sedov about contacts between Trotsky and German or Japanese officials: Ol'berg, Piatakov, Radek, Shestov, Rakovsky, Krestinskii, Bessonov, and Rozengol'ts. One man, Sokol'nikov, heard of Trotsky's collaboration with Japan from a Japanese diplomat.

We noted above that other defendants – Bukharin, for example – testified that they had heard about this at second or third hand and believed it. Bukharin said he had heard about it from Radek, whom he had every reason to believe. But if Radek had been lying

Bukharin would not have known, so Bukharin's testimony on this point is evidence at second hand.

The Moscow Trial defendants provided very strong evidence of Trotsky's collaboration with Germany and Japan. This evidence has never been successfully impugned. But it has been *declared* false so many times – its falsity taken for granted without evidence – that its "falsehood" is constituent of the current mainstream paradigm of Soviet history.

Chapter 2. Iakov A. Iakovlev

Dimitrov's Diary

In 2003 the diary of Georgi Dimitrov, head of the Comintern after 1935 and close associate of Stalin, was published. Dimitrov met frequently with Stalin and other Bolshevik leaders, and his diary contains many important passages and statements by Stalin and others. On December 16, 1936, Dimitrov met in the Kremlin with Stalin and four of his closest associates, Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, and Ordzhonikidze. During this meeting they received a report about an interrogation of Sokol'nikov of December 12, a few days before. Here is what Dimitrov wrote, with the phrases of special interest to our present investigation in boldface:

16 December 1936

– With "the Five" in the Kremlin

(Stal[in], Molot[ov], Kag[anovich], Vor[oshilov], Ordzhonikidze).

Exchange of opinions of Ch[inese] events. . . .

– On the French question: . . .

– From the investigation of Piatakov, Sokolnikov, Radek, and others:

Interrogation of Sokolnikov, 12 December 1936:

Question: Thus, the investigation concludes that Trotsky abroad and the center of the bloc within the USSR entered into negotiations with the Hitlerite and Japanese governments with the following aims:

First, to provoke a war by Germany and Japan against the USSR;

Second, to promote the defeat of the USSR in that war and to take advantage of that defeat to achieve the transfer of power in the USSR to [their] government bloc;

Third, on behalf of the future bloc government to guarantee territorial and economic concessions to the Hitlerite and Japanese governments.

Do you confirm this?

Reply: Yes, I confirm it.

Question: Do you admit that this activity by the bloc is tantamount to outright treason against the mother-land?

Reply: Yes, I admit it.

(Dimitrov 42-43)

Analysis

This meeting can be confirmed in the schedule of visitors to Stalin's office for December 16, 1936.[1] The four Politburo members named by Dimitrov are recorded as entering Stalin's office at 1905 hrs, fifteen minutes before Dimitrov entered along with Manuilsky, who was a Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and head of the Soviet delegation to it, while Dimitrov himself was General Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Dimitrov and Manuilsky stayed for fifty minutes. The two Comintern leaders were obviously there to discuss Comintern – international – matters. Sokol'nikov's testimony was relevant to their concerns.

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[1] "Posetiteli kremlevskogo kabineta I.V. Stalina." *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* 4 (1995), 35.

Dimitrov heard this at a meeting of political leaders of the highest level, including Stalin himself. There is no indication that Stalin – he would be the only person who might be able to get away with such a thing – "staged" this meeting for Dimitrov's benefit. Dimitrov, a staunch supporter of Stalin and the Soviet Union, did not need reassurance or "shoring up." And Dimitrov wrote this in his private diary, only recently published because of the demise of the Soviet bloc.

Therefore this entry is similar to the signatures of Stalin et al. on the Trotsky telegram six months later. It is an excellent gauge of what Stalin and top Soviet leaders believed at the time. This is significant because they had access to all the evidence, including a huge amount that is still secret.

Was Stalin Lying?

It is often asserted by Cold War historians that Stalin was a "liar" so that nothing he wrote should be "believed." Therefore – this logic might go – we should not "believe," in this case or in the case of the Trotsky telegram, the comments he wrote on statements and confessions – ever.

But this reasoning is all wrong. There is no reason to view Stalin as a liar any more than any other political figure. In the course of our research over the past decade we have found *no* examples of Stalin's "lying," even concerning the "Katyn massacre" question, for a recent discovery at a German mass murder site in Ukraine has shown that the "official version" of the "Katyn massacre" cannot possibly be correct. But in any case Katyn was a very different situation that allegedly involving lying to foreign powers, a common practice among all governments at all times.[2]

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[2] I will publish a book-length study of the Katyn Massacre issue in 2018. In the meantime see Grover Furr, "The 'Official Version' of the Katyn Massacre Disproven? Discoveries at a German Mass Murder Site in Ukraine." *Socialism and Democracy* 27, 2 (2013), 96-129. Online at https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/furr_katyn_2013.pdf Much more detail about the evidentiary questions of "Katyn" is on my "Katyn Forest Whodunnit" page, http://tinyurl.com/katyn-the-truth

Lying is a universal human trait. Everybody lies – but nobody lies all the time. Therefore, the fact that someone lied in one case or other is not evidence that they lied at another time. There's no reason to think that Stalin was lying here to Dimitrov and Manuilsky, in his words on Trotsky's telegram, or at any other time unless there is specific evidence that he was. This is, of course, true for anyone, not just for Stalin. There is no such thing as an historical figure "who can always be trusted," to tell the truth or one "who can never be trusted."

Finally, no single piece of evidence by itself is to be "believed" or "disbelieved" in any case. All evidence must be analyzed carefully, including in context with other evidence.

S.M. Uritsky

Only a tiny proportion of all the investigative materials from the 1930s have been made available to researchers and only a small part of that has been published. Occasionally a privileged researcher is permitted to read and quote from some investigative files to which no one else has been given access. Normally these are researchers who promote the "official" Russian government position, which corresponds to the Khrushchev-Cold War-Gorbachev-Trotskyist positions — the anti-Stalin paradigm — that all those convicted in the Moscow Trials, the Military Purges, plus many others, were completely innocent.

Such a researcher is Col. Nikolai S. Cherushev, author of a number of books arguing that no military conspiracies ever existed and, by extension, no other anti-government conspiracies could have existed either. Cherushev has been permitted to see and to quote liberally from investigative files of many military men that no one else has seen – or, at least, that no one else has published about.

One of these files is that of Komkor[3] S.P. Uritsky. In Uritsky's indictment we read the following:

> In the extremely exhaustive text of the sentence by the Military Collegium in the case of S.P. Uritsky of August 1, 1938, we read:
>
> – on the order of Gamarnik, Pyatakov, Iakir, and Tukhachevsky Uritsky transmitted their letters to Sedov to be passed to Trotsky;
>
> – was connected to the Trotskyist group of Souvarine in Paris, through which he passed espionage materials from Tukhachevsky for French intelligence.[4]

Analysis

We know from other evidence that these men were involved directly with Trotsky. Since Gamarnik, Iakir, and Tukhachevsky were also involved in military collaboration with Germany it is safe to assume that Uritsky's contact with Trotsky had something to do with at least Germany as well. However, given Cherushev's wording here we can't be sure that Uritsky did confess to direct contact with Trotsky. We can only be certain that the court found him guilty of doing so.

In a short fragment below from one of Uritsky's statements to the NKVD he said that he would make a clean breast of everything. So it appears that this high-ranking military officer confessed to send-

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[3] Corps Commander, equivalent to a two-star general in the US military. See Iurii Beremeev, *Anatomiia Armii.* Cited at http://army.armor.kiev.ua/index.html .

[4] Cherushev, N.S. *1937 god. Byl li zagovor voennykh?* Moskva: Veche, 2007, 179. (Cherushev, 1937)

ing messages from Gamarnik, Piatakov, Iakir, and Tukhachevsky to Trotsky via Sedov.

All Cherushev's works are devoted to the predetermined conclusion that no military conspiracy existed at all. That might explain why he has the access he does to investigative files to which no one else has been admitted: he can be trusted not to question the "canonical" viewpoint. Nevertheless Cherushev cites the following direct quotation from Uritsky's pen. On April 14, 1938, after referring to their "long-standing friendship" – a phrase not further explained – Uritsky wrote to NKVD officer Veniamin S. Agas:

> I have been feeling poorly in recent days, no bladder control, bloody vomiting, unable to think, if possible let me have a day's respite, [then] summon me, I will report to you, and then I will write everything completely. I wish to turn myself into the kind of arrestee who helps the authorities, I wish to earn the mercy of Soviet authority. (Cherushev 1937, 178)

As Cherushev notes, this confirms that Uritsky was ill. But it contains no accusation of torture or mistreatment. In any case, far from being a profession of innocence it is, on the contrary, an admission of guilt.

Personal contact with Trotsky or, as here, to claim that one had such personal contact, was highly unusual. The NKVD had no need to fabricate such a detail simply in order to frame an innocent man. On the contrary: it would have made Uritsky's confession stand out from most others, perhaps leading to an interview with a Politburo member or Stalin himself. That would put things out of Ezhov's control, because the arrestee might say that his testimony had been coerced. We know that Politburo members did interview some arrestees. So we can't just assume that Uritsky's confession was coerced. It may well have been genuine, and at this time we have no reason to doubt that it was.

Ezhov's second in command Mikhail Frinovskii identified Agas as one of Ezhov's "bone-breakers," skilled in beating defendants and

in fabricating convincing confessions. But this does not mean that *all* defendants were beaten into false confessions either. It ought to remind us that no individual piece of evidence can by itself be decisive, because each piece of evidence taken by itself is subject to multiple possible explanations or interpretations. It is only when the whole complex of circumstantial evidence is consistent with one conclusion that that conclusion becomes highly probable, and for all practical purposes, until proven otherwise, can be taken to represent the truth.

Ia. A. Iakovlev's Confession of October 1937

Among the documents from former Soviet archives that have been published since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 one of the most significant for our purposes is the lengthy interrogation of Ia. A. Iakovlev. Iakovlev had been People's Commissar for Agriculture during the collectivization period of the early 1930s. In 1937 he was a prominent member of the Central Committee. Iakovlev also held a number of other very responsible posts: head of the agricultural section of the C.C., and first assistant to the chairman of the Party Control Commission but in reality its head since Ezhov, its formal head, was spending full time as Commissar of the NKVD. Since August 11, 1936, Iakovlev had been a member of the secretariat for the first draft of the program of the VKP(b), the Bolshevik Party.[5]

Iakovlev had been very close to Stalin. He was one of those who worked most closely on the new Constitution that was announced in 1936, and that was supposed to bring free elections to the USSR. Along with Tal' and Stetskii, Iakovlev was, in reality, one of the authors of the Constitution. He had worked closely with Stalin on

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[5] I have consulted the following summaries of Iakovlev's life and career:
http://www.knowbysight.info/YaYY/05215.asp ;
http://www.hrono.info/biograf/yakovlev_ya.html ;
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Яковлев,_Яков_Аркадьевич For the date of August 11, 1936 and Iakovlev's place in the group to reform the Party program see Iurii N. Zhukov, *Inoi Stalin*. Moscow: Vagrius 2003, 268.(Zhukov)

this, one of Stalin's pet projects. (Zhukov 308 ff.) In short, Iakovlev was one of the very highest members of the Soviet government and Bolshevik Party outside the ranks of the Politburo itself.

Iakovlev was arrested on October 12, 1937. On October 15-18 he confessed that in 1923 Trotsky had asked him to be a Trotskyist "sleeper" in the Party – to go underground, cease all contact with any Trotskyists, and climb into responsible Party positions.

> Trotsky had already at that time posed the question in this context, that he should have his own agents in the Party leadership at the necessary time who could pass information to him and collaborate in his seizure of power. (Lubianka 1937-1938, 388[6])

Here are the parts of Iakovlev's statement, dated October 15-18, 1937, that concern his ties to Trotsky and to German intelligence. In the first section Iakovlev outlines how he was recruited to a secret Trotskyist conspiracy against the Party even before Lenin had died.

> Question: Explain how you managed to hide your Trotskyist anti-Soviet activity for so long, since 1923?
>
> Answer: This can be explained by the fact that, since 1923, following TROTSKY'S personal directives, I retreated from open struggle with the Party. I maneuvered and immediately took up a conspiratorial position. Outwardly I broke with the Trotskyists and conducted all my further anti-Soviet work under the flag of duplicity.
>
> Even in 1923 TROTSKY , foreseeing the possible failure of an open attack against the Party, considered it essential to make some part of his supporters very

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[6] Original text online at http://istmat.info/node/32385 Also at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/61208

carefully concealed so that they, while remaining in the Party and doing Party work, could become fortified, trusted by the Party masses and leadership, and could move gradually into the leadership of the Party.

TROTSKY set this task at that time so as to have his agents in the Party leadership at the necessary moment, so they could keep him informed and cooperate in the seizure of power. Such tasks were given to me as well.

Question: That is, such tasks of betrayal, provocation, and espionage, in the fulfillment of which you had already had experience from your collaboration with the Okhranka [Tsarist secret police in pre-Revolutionary times].

Answer: Yes.

Question: Continue your confession. Where and when did you ally yourself with TROTSKY?

Answer: In 1923 SOSNOVSKY put me in touch with TROTSKY. The meeting took place at VORONSKY'S apartment in the 1st Palace of Soviets in the Hotel 'Natsional.' In attendance were TROTSKY, SOSNOVSKY, VORONSKY and myself. In speaking of the plan for the work of the Trotskyists, TROTSKY was pointing out that the possibility of the temporary – as he put it – victory of the CC'ists was not excluded; he further said that in politics, as in war, it is necessary to take into account the possibility of temporary defeat and for that reason it was essential to insure oneself in advance on enemy territory.

TROTSKY especially pointed out that the conditions of struggle prove that the Party apparatus has attained decisive importance. Proceeding from that, he set before us the task: to strive in our future work not only to penetrate the Party apparatus, but to strengthen

ourselves there, to move forward, to select and recruit out of the Party apparatus cadres of supporters of TROTSKY'S line. Proceeding from that, TROTSKY proposed that I outwardly cease all contact with Trotskyists; in future, always and everywhere to proclaim myself a firm supporter of the Central Committee, a merciless enemy of Trotskyists, to use everything in order to increase my influence in the Party, but at the same time extremely carefully and conspiratorially, by second and third hand, to move forward the work of attracting very carefully selected people into the Trotskyist organization.

After that meeting and directions from TROTSKY I ceased open contact with VORONSKY and SOSNOVSKY, as with compromised persons; on my part I instructed those persons connected with me and who supported Trotskyism, in the spirit of the instructions I had received from TROTSKY. (Lubianka 1937-1938, 388-389)

A few pages further in his interrogation Iakovlev outlines how he was recruited by German intelligence in 1935 in Berlin. According to Iakovlev he had been recruited by a German agent named Shmuke.[7]

The German agent who, according to Iakovlev, recruited him into cooperation did so on two bases. Shmuke knew from Russian émigrés in Germany that Iakovlev had collaborated with the Russian Tsarist Okhranka, or secret police, towards the end of 1916 in Petrograd, and used this information to blackmail Iakovlev by threatening to expose it.

Once in the Bolshevik Party and after the Revolution a confession of collaboration, even at a vulnerable early age, would destroy

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[7] Presumably "Schmucke" in German.

one's Party career. *Hiding* such a connection could be much worse because it suggested that such a person was completely untrustworthy and might still be some kind of clandestine agent or other. A Party member was not supposed to have any secrets – certainly none of any political relevance – from the Party. Moreover, it made one vulnerable to blackmail and so an additional security risk.

Shmuke also knew from Trotsky about Iakovlev's participation in the Trotskyist underground, and revealed this to him. This section of the document also constitutes strong evidence that Trotsky collaborated with German intelligence

> Question: You speak about GAMARNIK'S and VAREIKIS' connections with foreign intelligence services. Did you yourself have such connections?
>
> Answer: Yes, I had ties with German intelligence.
>
> Question: Tell us concretely, when did you establish ties with German intelligence?
>
> Answer: I was recruited by German intelligence when I was in Germany, in Berlin, in the autumn of 1935, and at that time and until my arrest I collaborated with this intelligence and maintained contact with it through a special representative in Moscow.
>
> In Berlin I was in the hospital "Catholic Commune" for treatment. About a week after my arrival in Berlin a man in a suit, whom I did not know, came to me in the hospital, and introduced himself to me by the name SHMUKE, and said that "he had instructions to have discussions with me on a number of questions of interest to him and of urgency for me." He announced that he knew "from my political friends" about my membership in the underground organization that was struggling with the existing powers in the USSR and that, following orders of the German government, he wished to establish businesslike relations with me. SHMUKE further told me that in leading governmental

spheres in Germany there were many friends of those tendencies in the USSR that were hostile to the current leadership, that these German spheres supported those tendencies in the USSR – therefore the German government considered it possible to send SHMUKE to me for negotiations.

Fearing a provocation, I naturally did not want to disclose myself to this unknown person and expressed my total confusion concerning what he had proposed to me. However, SHMUKE stubbornly continued that it was useless for me to deny facts that both he and I knew; that the German government was not turning to me alone, among leaders of underground organizations in the USSR, with such a proposal. At last he said to me emphatically: "Your chief leader L. TROTSKY is acting in full contact and on the basis of mutual benefit with the new Germany." I still attempted to end this conversation and made as though I wanted to stand up in order to say goodbye and force SHMUKE to leave. But SHMUKE did not budge from the spot and told me that I was too careful and, clearly, did not trust him; that this carefulness was a good sign in me, on the one hand, however, he had the full possibility of proving to me the "official nature" of his visit and had the full information of the German government about me. After that he told me that "in Germany they had been very interested in me personally even when I was the People's Commissar for Agriculture, and that it was not by chance" – said SHMUKE – "that one of our magazines in Berlin had been graced by your photograph and biography." In fact this did take place: my photograph had appeared in one of the fascist magazines. Then he said that in Germany live emigrants from Russia, including former members of the Russian police, who have informed the German authorities about certain episodes of my collaboration with the Russian police at the end of 1916 in Petrograd. Al-

though they had the full ability to compromise me with the Soviet authorities at any moment they, said SHMUKE, did not wish to do that, since they hope to establish with me the same kind of contact as they have with TROTSKY.

I understood that I had fallen into a pitfall and there was no other way out. Faced with this fact, and realizing that the Germans were fully informed about me, I decided to agree with SHMUKE'S proposal, all the more since SHMUKE'S information about TROTSKY'S connections with Germany completely corresponded with what PIATAKOV had said to me and what TROTSKY had written.

I then asked what specifically he – SHMUKE – wanted from me, and what services I might render the German government, adding that by my work I was mainly involved in agricultural affairs and had no relation to military matters of defense. SHMUKE retorted that the German government was not interested only in defense work, but in the situation within the country, in the Bolshevik party, and especially in the situation within the government and the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party; he asked me to inform the German authorities about these matters from now on and, as he put it, he hoped that with this information I would also help my political friends who were working in full contact with Germany.

Besides that, SHMUKE stressed to me that he and his leaders would not object if I would inform the German government, within those limits I thought possible, about the affairs of the underground organizations to which I belonged. SHMUKE said that he assumed this would be to our mutual benefit.

Then I told SHMUKE that I accepted his proposal and agreed that in future, to the best of my abilities and

> strength, I would inform the German government on the matters of interest to the Germans.
>
> Considering the matter more thoroughly, I decided that if possible I would sell my collaboration to the Germans more dearly, first of all to obtain from German intelligence corresponding possibilities for foreign connections for our organization and, in the first place, with TROTSKY, and also to increase my importance in the eyes of the German government. (Lubianka 1937-1938, 394-395)

Assessing Iakovlev's Confession

This confession by Iakovlev is especially important because of Iakovlev's high position in the Soviet government and Bolshevik Party and his closeness to Stalin. He confirms that as early as 1923 Trotsky formed a factional underground movement within the Party. The years 1922 and 1923 pop up frequently in the transcript of the March 1938 Moscow Trial as the year many of those who confessed to being in the Trotskyist underground began their activities.[8]

Iakovlev admits direct ties with German intelligence. This confirms allegations by others that Trotsky's movement had such contacts. He also confirms German ties of Gamarnik – that is, the Military conspirators led by Tukhachevsky – and Vareikis, head of the Party in the Far East who was arrested for ties with the Japanese. NKVD General Genrikh S. Liushkov, who defected to the Japanese in June 1938, named both Gamarnik and Vareikis to his Japanese handlers as genuine conspirators in the Far East.[9]

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[8] See 1938 Moscow Trial 6, 9 (Rozengol'ts); 45 (Bessonov, about Reich).

[9] See Coox 1998 (1), 151, 152,157; Coox 1998 (2) 81 (Vareikis); Coox 1998 (1) 156; Coox 1998 (2) 85 (Gamarnik).

A dramatic revelation is Iakovlev's claim that he heard directly from a German agent that Trotsky was working with the Germans. He confirms that he had also heard this from Piatakov, and that he had also received this information in writing from Trotsky himself.

Stalin's Annotations

The document immediately following Iakovlev's interrogation in the same volume is a copy of Stalin's handwritten questions on his copy of Iakovlev's interrogation:

> 1) Did he know about Vareikis' service with the Tsarist secret police (*okhranka)*?
>
> 2) His opinion about Mikhailov from Voronezh and his participation in the c.-r. org. [counter-revolutionary organization – GF].
>
> 3) His contact with Trotsky (did he see him personally in 1935 or in 1934).
>
> 4) How did he want to use MOPR? Whom in MOPR did he make use of? [MOPR = *Mezhdunarodnoe Obshchestvo Pomoshchi Revoliutsioneram,* International Organization for Aid to Revolutionaries, the Soviets' organization to give help to revolutionaries in fascist countries where communist parties were illegal and subject to severe repression. – GF]
>
> 5) "Turn" Iakovlev's wife: he is a conspirator and she must tell us everything. Ask her about Stasova, Kirsanova,[10] and other friends – acquaintances of hers. (Lubianka 1937-1938 396)[11]

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[10] In the following photograph of 1936 Kirsanova is second from left, Stasova third from left: http://tinyurl.com/kirsanova-stasova . Biographical sketches of both are included in *Zhenshchiny russkoi revoliutsii* ("Women of the Russian Revolution," Moscow: Politizdat, 1982) along with materials about Inessa Armand, Lenin's wife Krupskaia, Lenin's sisters, and others. Kirsanova died in 1947 as a lecturer in the Central Committee school (

Stalin's handwritten comments on this confession show that he believed this confession of Iakovlev's was true and suggested further lines of investigation following from it. No reasonable reading of the evidence would suggest that Stalin had Iakovlev framed and then carried on a charade by annotating the confession and asking for Iakovlev's wife, also a Party member, to be brought in for questioning about his activities.

The "Stasova" referred to is Elena D. Stasova. She was one of the earliest Bolsheviks, having joined the Party in 1898, the same year as Stalin. She had long been working in the Comintern. Also an Old Bolshevik and participant in the Revolution of 1917, K.I. Kirsanova, wife of famous Old Bolshevik Emelian Iaroslavskii, worked with Stasova and others in the Comintern. She published books on women under socialism.

The lists of those who met with Stalin in his office from the early 1930s until his death have been published. We now know that Iakovlev met in Stalin's office with members of Stalin's groups of supporters in the Politburo on the evening of October 11, 1937.[12] Thereafter he disappears from the political record. According to one source Iakovlev was arrested the next day, October 12.[13] According to the header of the interrogation transcript, dated October 15-18, 1937, Iakovlev had already made some kind of statement of confession on October 14.

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http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ярославский,_Емельян_ Михайлович). Stasova continued to hold another high Comintern position until the Comintern's dissolution in 1943. She died in 1966 (http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Стасова,_Елена_ Дмитриевна .

[11] Original text online at http://istmat.info/node/32386. Now also at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/61209

[12] "Posetiteli kremlevskogo kabineta I.V. Stalin," *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* 4 (1995), 66-67. A facsimile of the archival document itself may be viewed online at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/ stalinvisitors101137.pdf.

[13] "Iakovlev (Epshtein) Iakov Arkad'evich. Biograficheskii Ukazatel." Hrono.ru. At http://www.hrono.ru/biograf/yakovlev_ya.html . The CC Plenum Decree on the removal of Iakovlev and others from CC membership (Lubianka 1937-1938,, No. 262) is dated December 4-8 by the editors.

Stalin and his supporters wanted contested elections to the Soviet government. The Party First Secretaries opposed contested elections. Iurii Zhukov has followed the struggle over this issue through the archival evidence. This struggle for contested elections was finally lost during the October 1937 Central Committee Plenum.[14] We discuss this struggle in *Yezhov vs Stalin*.

Assessing Iakovlev's Confession: The 1938 Moscow Trial

In the note to Iakovlev's confession Stalin suggested that I. M. Vareikis had also been involved with the Tsarist secret police. Like Iakovlev (born 1896) Vareikis (born 1894) was a young man during the First World War. He had been arrested on October 10, just two days before Iakovlev. Perhaps it was Vareikis who named Iakovlev. Iakovlev did name Vareikis in his own confession.

Both Vareikis and Iakovlev were named as active underground Trotskyists by defendants in the March 1938 Moscow Trial. Defendant Grin'ko testified about Iakovlev's active role in the conspiracy. He evidently regarded Iakovlev as one of the leaders of the "terrorist" activity and suggested Iakovlev was in touch with Trotsky.

> GRINKO: In the event of success the organization intended to set up a bourgeois Ukrainian state after the type of the fascist state.
>
> About this character of the organization I told a prominent member of the Right and Trotskyite conspiracy, Yakovlev. In the Right and Trotskyite circles with whom I had occasion to speak, this tendency to

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[14] For a discussion of Stalin's struggle in favor of contested elections (as stipulated in the 1936 Constitution), Stalin's final defeat, and many specific references to the research of Iurii Zhukov and others, see Grover Furr, "Stalin and the Struggle for Democratic Reform," Parts One and Two, in *Cultural Logic* 2005, http://clogic.eserver.org/2005/2005.html

> transform our organization into a fascist type of organization undoubtedly existed. (*1938 Trial*, 71)

By "fascist" – earlier in his testimony he had called it "national-fascist"– Grin'ko meant that the Ukrainian Nationalist organizations outside the Soviet Union had become organized in a fascist manner and were under either German or Polish nationalist leadership. The fascist nature of Ukrainian nationalism during the interwar period has long been recognized.[15]

> GRINKO: Gradually extending my connections with the Right and Trotskyite centre, and having ascertained who belonged to it, I at the beginning of 1934 formed an opinion of what the "Right and Trotskyite centre" was.
>
> From a number of conversations and connections, and the tasks I received from Rykov, Bukharin, Gamarnik, Rosengoltz, Yakovlev, Antipov, Rudzutak, Yagoda, Vareikis, and a number of other persons, it became clear to me that at that time the "Right and Trotskyite center" based itself mainly on the military aid of aggressors. (76)
>
> . . .
>
> VYSHINSKY: Tell us about the terrorist activities.
>
> GRINKO: At that period terrorist activities were one of the main weapons in the common arsenal of struggle against the Soviet power.
>
> VYSHINSKY: From whom did you learn this?

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[15] See Alexander J. Motyl. *The Turn To The Right: The Ideological Origins And Development Of Ukrainian Nationalism*, 1919-1929. Boulder, CO / New York: East European Quarterly / Columbia University Press, 1980. There is a large and rapidly growing body of research on fascist Ukrainian Nationalism. See Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist: Fascism, Genocide, and Cult.* New York: Ibidem Press, 2014.

GRINKO: From Rykov, Yakovlev, Gamarnik and Pyatakov.

. . .

VYSHINSKY: Where did this terrorist link emanate from?

GRINKO: From Trotsky. I learned this from Gamarnik. (77)

. . .

In carrying out the sabotage measures and sabotage instructions in the financing of agriculture, no little assistance was rendered by Rudzutak, who was in charge of financial affairs in the Council of People's Commissars, and by Yakovlev. (80)

Grin'ko's confession corroborates that of Iakovlev. There would seem to be little point in "coordinating" confessions at the public March 1938 trial with a confession – Iakovlev's – that was secret and never intended to be published at all.

Interrogations of Nikolai I. Vavilov

We have further evidence concerning Iakovlev from the investigative materials of Nikolai I. Vavilov, a prominent Soviet biologist who was arrested, tried and imprisoned in 1940 for his clandestine participation in an anti-Soviet conspiracy in the early 1930s. Best known for his feud with Trofim Lysenko and as a champion of Mendelian genetics, Vavilov's reputation as a scientist was high in his own day and has increased since. It was long assumed that his arrest and conviction was really a screen for repressing his scientific view. But according to archival evidence released since the end of the USSR this was not the case.

Like Iakovlev, Vavilov has long since been "rehabilitated." However, that does not mean that he was not guilty or that his confessions have been refuted. In them he implicated Iakovlev.

Question: You have been arrested as an active participant of an antisoviet organization and as an agent of foreign intelligence services. Do you admit your guilt to these charges?

Answer: I admit myself guilty in that since 1930 I have been a member of an antisoviet organization of Rightists that existed in the system of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the USSR. I do not confess myself guilty of espionage.

Question: Bear in mind that you will not succeed in keeping your espionage activity hidden and that the investigation will interrogate you about it, but for now confess with whom you have been connected in the antisoviet work.

Answer: In antisoviet work I have been connected with the following persons: Yakovlev, former People's Commissar for Agriculture, Chernov, former People's Commissar for Agriculture, Eikhe, former People's Commissar for Agriculture, Muralov, former vice-Commissar for Agriculture, Gaister, former vice-Commissar for Agriculture. . . .[16]

Vavilov made a differentiated confession. Accused of having spied for foreign intelligence services, he refused to admit it. But he did admit participating in a Rightist anti-Soviet organization within the People's Commissariat of Agriculture throughout the tenures of five commissars. The fact that Vavilov confessed to one capital charge while refusing to confess to another makes his confession appear more reliable. A likely explanation for such a confession is the desire to tell the truth.

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[16] IAkov Rokitianskii et al. *Sud palacha. Nikolai Vavilov v zastenkakh NKVD. Biograficheskii ocherk, dokumenty*. Moscow: Academia, 1999. Transcript of the interrogation of the arrestee Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov of August 24 1940, 269-70. (Vavilov)

The commissars he names as Rightist conspirators include Iakovlev and Eikhe. Eikhe too was executed for massive illegal executions and repressions in collaboration with Ezhov.

> *Question*: You have admitted your guilt in that from 1930 you have been a participant in an antisoviet organization of Rightists that has existed in the system of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the USSR.
>
> Tell us by whom and under what circumstances you were recruited into the aforesaid organization.
>
> *Answer*: I was recruited to the anti-Soviet organization by the former People's Commissar for Agriculture of the USSR YAKOVLEV Yakov Arkad'evich in 1930. The process of recruitment took place through my receiving, directly from YAKOVLEV, and also from him via GAISTER Aron Izrailovich – former vice-president of the agricultural academy and VOL'F Moisei Mikhailovich – second vice-president of the agricultural academic – obvious orders for sabotage, which I carried out in the agricultural academy and in the Institute of Plant Development.[17]
>
> *Question*: It is not clear why YAKOVLEV recruited you to the antisoviet organization. What was his basis for doing this?
>
> *Answer*: During the process of my carrying out YAKOVLEV's directives he became aware of my antisoviet sentiments which, at the beginning, were most clearly expressed in the high evaluation that I gave to American and Western European agricultural methods and my emphasizing their superiority in compari-

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[17] Vavilov has long since been "rehabilitated" and this Institute, still in existence in Russia, is named in his honor.

son with the development of agriculture in the Soviet Union. (Transcript of interrogation of August 27-28, 1940. Vavilov, 271-2)

Unquestionably it was also the fact that I carried out every assignment given me by YAKOVLEV that facilitated my being drawn into the antisoviet organization.

Question: And in what form was your conversation with YAKOVLEV concerning your participation in the antisoviet organization of Rightists?

Answer: There was no direct conversation about this. I understood him by the obvious assignments of sabotage that I received from YAKOVLEV.

Question: Why do you conclude that it was precisely YAKOVLEV who recruited you to the antisoviet organization of Rightists?

Answer: I conclude that because it was precisely from this period – my carrying out YAKOVLEV's directives – that my obvious work of sabotage begins in the organization of science and in that of plant culture in the sense of justifying plant culture projects.

Question: You have confessed that you were recruited to the antisoviet organization of Rightists by YAKOVLEV and at the same time declare that you never had any direct conversation with YAKOVLEV about this organization. You are either confusing or simply do not wish to say that even before your introduction into the organization of Rightists you were one of the ideologues and leaders of the antisoviet organization about which you are now remaining silent. (Transcript of interrogation of August 28-29, 1940. Vavilov, 273-4)

In these passages Vavilov claims that he collaborated in Iakovlev's Rightist organization without having been specifically recruited to

it. This confuses his interrogator, who does not understand how Iakovlev could have been a member without having been specifically recruited to it and also how he could state that he had been recruited (*zaverbovan*) by Iakovlev and yet never have spoken with Iakovlev about the organization.

The interrogator draws the obvious conclusion from this apparently contradictory assertion by Vavilov that the accused must be hiding something. Something is missing that if added would make sense of Vavilov's contradictory story. Vavilov gives fuller details in the following passage, stating that he and Iakovlev had a mutual understanding, and that Iakovlev spoke to him in hints and allusions rather than speaking directly of conspiracies and organizations.

> *Question*: You confessed earlier that YAKOVLEV recruited you into the antisoviet organization, that, supposedly, he never had any direct conversations with you about this. We demand that you make your confession more precise.
>
> *Answer*: I confirm the fact that I was recruited into the antisoviet organization of Rightists by YAKOVLEV Yakov Arkad'evich. However, YAKOVLEV never explicitly said that I should take part in an antisoviet organization, and there was no special need for him to do so, since YAKOVLEV knew my antisoviet views, about which I confessed in previous interrogations, and could confidently rely on me to carry out antisoviet work. In addition I enjoyed YAKOVLEV'S particular trust, and he himself told me many times: "We know you well – we trust you, and for that reason I demand you carry out my directives without objection." To my frequent declarations about my desire to leave my leading administrative work in the Agricultural Academy YAKOVLEV answered: "We will not let you go, we need you, we understand each other." (Transcript of interrogation of August 30-31, 1940. Vavilov, 278-84)

However, in the following passage Vavilov does give specific details about the sabotage of certain agricultural undertakings he was ordered to accomplish by Iakovlev.

> *Answer*: One of the basic undertakings of sabotage carried out with my direct participation upon YAKOVLEV'S orders was the creation of a great superfluity of narrowly specialized scientific-research institutes that were of absolutely no vital importance...
>
> The next sabotage action of significance that was carried out with my direct participation upon YAKOVLEV'S order and whose consequences may still be felt today was the collapse of the provincial [*oblast'*] network of experimental pasture-farming stations, the assignment of which under conditions of socialist reconstruction and the wide variation of climate conditions and soils in our country is of great importance, . .
>
> Besides that I directly participated in the development of deliberately harmful plans of plant culture during the First and Second Five-Year Plans. I carried out this sabotage work according to the direct order of the former People's Commissar for Agriculture YAKOVLEV Y.A. and the former vice-presidents of the agricultural academy VOL'F M.M., GAISTER A.I. . . .
>
> Despite this I was given a directive by YAKOVLEV, through VOL'F, of expanding the compulsory plan of area to be sown in 1937 of 150 million hectares, which, it was clear, did not correspond to the possibilities at that time. . .
>
> (Transcript of interrogation of September 5-7, 1940. Vavilov, 284-288)

Analysis of Vavilov's Confessions

These confessions of Vavilov's, at least insofar as they implicate Iakovlev, appear completely credible. There is no reason that the NKVD investigators would have wanted Vavilov to fabricate testimony against Iakovlev, who by that time had long since been executed. By 1940, when Vavilov was interrogated, Ezhov and his men too had long since been arrested, tried, and executed for fabricating false cases against a very large number of people, and Beria was now in charge of the NKVD. During Beria's tenure the cases against large numbers of people falsely accused under Ezhov were reviewed, and many of the victims released.

Here, as virtually everywhere in history, there is no such thing as "absolute proof" – all evidence can be interpreted in multiple ways -- and therefore no "certainty." But the fact that there are many pieces of circumstantial evidence, all of which implicate Iakovlev, suggests that Iakovlev was not lying in his confession and neither was his wife. Furthermore, Iakovlev's testimony is broadly consistent with the confessions of many of the Moscow Trials defendants, of the Tukhachevsky Affair defendants, and the evidence we have cited above.

According to the volume we have been citing Vavilov's interrogators claimed in a report that they had carried out 240 interrogations of Vavilov that occupied 1000 hours. Vavilov himself claimed in a letter dated April 25, 1942, to Beria, who was head of the NKVD at the time, that he had been subjected to 400 interrogations that took 1700 hours! Such time-consuming and therefore expensive investigations bespeak a genuine attempt to find out the truth. No such titanic efforts are required either to fabricate an entirely false set of confessions or to compel a middle-aged academic to fabricate them himself. Moreover, when it was all completed and Vavilov had been convicted NKVD chief Lavrentii Beria acceded to Vavilov's request for clemency. The scientist was in the process of being moved to the East ahead of the German military advance when he died on January 26, 1943.

Confession of Iakovlev's Wife

In 2004 a short excerpt from just one of the interrogation-confessions of Sokolovskaia, Iakovlev's wife, was published. This corresponds exactly to the time Iakovlev himself was under interrogation.

In his own confession Iakovlev said that he had collaborated with Ian Gamarnik, head of the Political Department of the Red Army who had committed suicide on May 30, 1937, when questioned about the Tukhachevsky conspiracy. Iakovlev named his wife as a friend of Gamarnik's family. She worked in the film studio Mosfilm. According to a report to Stalin from Ezhov of April 30, 1938, Sokolovskaia headed a Trotskyist organization at her workplace that obtained weapons for a planned uprising.[18]

Stalin's remarks on Iakovlev's interrogation-confession, quoted above, are dated "no later than October 20, 1937" (Lubianka 1937-1938 No. 227, p. 396). Iakovlev's wife Elena Kirillovna Sokolovskaia was arrested on October 12, 1937. On October 17 she composed a "special communication" to NKVD head Nikolai Ezhov in which she confessed to knowledge of her husband's Trotskyist activities.

> Iakovlev has been a Trotskyist since 1923. Already in 1923 he was taking part in the struggle against the Party on Trotsky's side. During this period he was connected with a group of active Trotskyists — Voronsky, El'tsin, Popov N.N., Mikhailov, and took an active part in the fractional meetings of the group...
>
> During the past five years Iakovlev has taken an active role in the underground anti-Soviet organization that stood on Trotskyist positions. He was in an especially conspiratorial position, acted with hypocrisy in order

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[18] *Lubianka 1937-1938* No. 323, pp. 529-30. Now online at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/61342.

to strengthen his position in Party work while trying to move towards the leadership of the Party.

Along with Iakovlev, Vareikis and Bauman played an active role in this underground organization...

Iakovlev was in anti-Party contact with the leader of the military conspiracy, Gamarnik. Through Gamarnik he maintained contact with Piatakov, who headed the Trotskyist underground...

My guilt is even greater because after the exposure of Gamarnik, Iakir, Popov N.N., who were connected in counterrevolutionary work with Iakovlev, Bauman, and Vareikis, I did not have the courage to tear myself away from this counterrevolutionary filth, go to the Party, and expose this gang of enemies of the Party and the people. (Lubianka 1937-1938, 398-9).

But she was to face far more serious charges. By April 1938 at least one of her coworkers in Mosfilm had named her as the leader of a clandestine Trotskyist group in that organization.

> SLIVKIN ... confessed that he took an active part in counterrevolutionary Trotskyist activity, and that one of the serious underground organizations under his leadership was established at the "Mosfilm" cinema studio.
>
> SLIVKIN confessed that the organization's main leader was SOKOLOVSKAIA (wife of IAKOVLEV) and BABITSKY, the director of the studio.
>
> SLIVKIN confessed that the organization was connected in counterrevolutionary work with GAMARNIK and EIDEMAN. Upon the directives of GAMARNIK and EIDEMAN the Trotskyist organization at the "Mosfilm" cinema studio, under the guise of working with Osoaviakhim, organized in 1935 a shooting range of a

> military type to prepare the leaders of the units that would be in the uprising. (Lubianka 1937-1938, 529)

Both Stasova and Kirsanova, both prominent Old Bolsheviks, must have been investigated. On November 11, 1937, Stalin privately told Dimitrov:

> We shall probably arrest Stasova, too. Turned out she's scum. Kirsanova is very closely involved with Yakovlev. She's scum." (Dimitrov 69)

On November 16, 1937, Dimitrov noted "Resolution on the dismissals of Kirsanova and Stasova." In Stasova's case this meant dismissal from her post as Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee of MOPR and Chair of the Central Committee of the Soviet MOPR.

Yet neither Stasova nor Kirsanova was arrested, much less repressed. This must mean that Stalin's serious suspicions against them were not borne out by investigation. The investigation into their cases must have been an objective one, rather than a frame-up or one that simply aimed to invent "evidence" to sustain Stalin's suspicions. And that not only suggests that the investigations of at least some prominent Bolsheviks were carried out in a proper manner. It means that, whatever his suspicions, Stalin wanted to know the truth.[19]

Stalin's note complains that the interrogator did not ask the right questions of Sokolovskaia:

> On the first page is a handwritten annotation: "Com. Ezhov: Which Mikhailov? They didn't even ask his name and patronymic . . . what fine investigators! What's important is not Iakovlev's and Sokolovskaia's past activity but their sabotage and espionage work during the past year and the recent months of 1937.

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[19] We discuss this, with references, in a chapter in the third volume of this work.

> We also need to know why both of these scoundrels were going abroad almost every year. J. Stalin." (Lubianka 1937-1938, 399 n.)[20]

Here as in the case of Iakovlev's interrogation Stalin has annotated the interrogation in such a way as to rule out any suggestion that he had ordered it fabricated or faked. He was attempting to learn from the interrogation how deep the conspiracy ran. This is evidence that the interrogation was genuine. As such, it is also evidence that Iakovlev's interrogation was not faked, and therefore that Iakovlev's confession about Shmuke and Trotsky's contacts with the Nazis is also true.

What concerned Stalin was not the history of Iakovlev's disloyalty but *recent* matters. "The past year and the recent months of 1937" had seen the Tukhachevsky conspiracy of top military leaders spying for Germany, plus allegations of widespread conspiratorial activity on the side of Germany and Japan. This too is consistent with the fact that Stalin genuinely believed that Iakovlev really did conspire with Germany.

Iakovlev's "Rehabilitation"

Aside from the confession we cite here none of the investigative or court materials from Iakovlev's file have ever been made public. We do have the report (*zapiska*, or memorandum, shorter and/or less formal than a full report) recommending Iakovlev be posthumously "rehabilitated" dated December 27, 1956, and signed by Roman Rudenko, General Procuror (Prosecutor) of the USSR.[21] It declares Iakovlev innocent but without giving any evidence whatsoever that he was, in fact, innocent. It is similar to many other such published "rehabilitation" reports from the Khrushchev and

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[20] Online at http://istmat.info/node/32388. Also at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/61211. Stalin's remarks alone are in Vol. 18 of the new edition of Stalin's works; online at http://grachev62.narod.ru/stalin/t18/t18_065.htm.

[21] *RKEB* 2 (2003) No. 30, pp. 215-216; note 41 on p. 808.

Gorbachev eras. Elsewhere we have studied a number of these obviously fraudulent "reports."

We have no evidence that Iakovlev was tortured, beaten, etc. Nor would it explain why Iakovlev confessed at trial. We know he did so because, among other evidence, even Rudenko's "zapiska" says he did – the full transcript of his trial has not been declassified:

> Thus Iakovlev admitted his guilt in the commission of counterrevolutionary crimes, affirmed both during the preliminary investigation and at his trial that he, supposedly, had recruited to the counterrevolutionary organization of Rights Vareikis, Mikhailov, Gegechkori, Tsyl'ko, Tokarev, Polovinkin, Sidel'nikov, Iosifov, and Odintsov, and was also supposedly in contact in the anti-Soviet activity with Postyshev, Rudzutak, Bubnov, Gamarnik, Rukhimovich, Antipov, Sulimov, Komarov, Bauman, Popov, Goloded, and others, in all more than 100 persons.

However, all the testimony of these men against others was then dismissed as false on the grounds that they had previously been "rehabilitated," i.e., declared innocent. Since no affirmative evidence of Iakovlev's innocence was provided, this must mean that Rudenko's men could not find any, and could only find evidence of his guilt. This is one sign of the fraudulent nature of this "rehabilitation."[22]

Probably another such sign is that this 1956 report, in order to support Iakovlev's "rehabilitation," said that Iakovlev was a member of the "Rights" rather than of the "Trotskyists." In 1956 Khrushchev and his men were looking with favor on the Rights but Trotskyists were still viewed with great hostility. Had Rudenko's report been truthful that Iakovlev had been a Trotskyist, they would not have been able to "rehabilitate" him.

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[22] See Grover Furr, *Khrushchev Lied*, Chapter 11.

The memorandum also declares that NKVD man "Kazakevich," who had taken part in the investigation of Iakovlev, had said – evidently in 1956 – that "methods of physical pressure" were used against Iakovlev. His testimony is not available. Even his name is not certain. No first name and patronymic are given. An NKVD man named Kozakevich is one of two investigators who signed the confession of Iakovlev that we have examined.

"Methods of physical pressure" can mean almost anything, from real torture – beatings, for example – to the "third degree," prolonged sleeplessness, and so on. But Iakovlev confessed within two days of his arrest, so there was no time for any prolonged pressure. Moreover, the fact that a suspect was subjected to some kind of "physical pressure" is not evidence of that suspect's innocence.

It is doubtful that Ezhov would have dared to fabricate a false case against someone as close to Stalin as Iakovlev, who most recently worked with Stalin on the new constitution. After all, Ezhov could not have known in advance that Stalin would not choose to interview Iakovlev himself, and that Iakovlev would not inform on Ezhov to Stalin if he had been forced to incriminate himself. And, as we've noted above, Stalin's comments on the interrogations of Iakovlev and his wife are not consistent with any theory that Stalin was involved with Ezhov, or at all, in "framing" Iakovlev for some reason.

Chapter 3. Tukhachevsky and Others

Tukhachevsky and the Military Leaders

Much of the evidence we present concerning Trotsky's collaboration with Germany and/or Japan comes from the investigative materials connected with the so-called "Tukhachevsky Affair." On June 11, 1937, Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky, one of only five marshals of the Red Army, and seven other very high-ranking military commanders were tried and convicted of collaboration with Trotsky, other oppositionists, Germany, and/or Japan to bring about the overthrow of the Stalin government, the assassination of its leading members, the facilitation of war between the USSR and its major enemies Germany, Japan, and Poland, seizure of power, reversion to capitalism, and an alliance with the Axis countries.

Budennyi's Letter to Voroshilov

One of the judges at the special military court was Marshal Semion Budennyi. On June 26, 1937, Budennyi sent a letter to Commissar for Defense Kliment Voroshilov in which he outlined his impressions of the trial and what it meant. As we studied it in more detail in volume one, *Trotsky's 'Amalgams,'* we will only consider it briefly here.

This letter has been dishonestly quoted out of context by several Russian writers, as will be seen. For example, among the lines that have been quoted is this sentence:

> PRIMAKOV[1] very stubbornly denied that he led a terrorist group consisting of SHMIDT, KUZ'MICHEV and others, against com. VOROSHILOV.

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[1] Vitalii Primakov was one of the eight officers tried and executed in June 1937 in the "Tukhachevsky Affair."

What has *always* been omitted are the following passages which follow immediately after the sentence above:

> He denied this on the basis that, he said, **TROTSKY had entrusted him, PRIMAKOV, with a more serious task – to organize an armed uprising in Leningrad**, for which purpose he, PRIMAKOV, was obliged to remain strictly secret from all terrorist groups, to break his ties with all Trotskyists and Rights and at the same time to win for himself authority and the absolute trust of the Party and the Army command.
>
> PRIMAKOV did not, however, deny that he had indeed earlier led a terrorist group and for that purpose had recommended SHMIDT to the post of commander of the mechanized corps.

By means of the omission of these paragraphs, a passage in which Primakov confessed to a somewhat different role in the same conspiracy is made to appear to be a claim of innocence that implies Primakov was "framed." This is the same technique that we have seen employed by Shelepin in misquoting Iakir's letter to the 22nd Party Congress in 1962, discussed in a previous chapter.

Another passage in Budennyi's letter reveals that Tukhachevsky had testified that the German *Luftwaffe* was prepared to come to the aid of the opposition uprising in Leningrad.

> Tukhachevsky received an instruction from General RUMSHTET[2] that the plan for sabotaging the Red Army should take into account the most likely directions of the main blows of the German armies: one against the Ukraine – Lvov, Kiev – and the others, the seizure of Leningrad by the rebels, something that would be very beneficial to Germany as it could ren-

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[2] Presumably, from context, General Gerd von Rundstedt, later a Field Marshal. See http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Rundstedt .

> der help to the rebels with its rather significant air force, which ought to advertise itself as forces coming over to the rebels from the side of the Soviet forces.

We know from another archival document, Marshal Voroshilov's address to the "Aktiv" (officers directly attached) of the Commissariat of Defense on June 9, 1937, that this information stems from Putna's confession.[3] It concerns what he was told by German General Erhard Milch, one of the highest ranking commanders of the German *Luftwaffe*.[4] Reading from an undated confession by Putna, Voroshilov stated the following:

> [German Air Force General] Milch directly states – I ask you to say this to Karakhan, also a spy since 1927 who carried out the negotiations on behalf of these swine – Milch directly states. . . : "If you can capture Leningrad, the Leningrad *oblast'*, you can count on serious help from our side and, mainly, on help from our air force, under the guise of forces that have gone over to you from the legal government. We will give you our air forces in significant quantities with our own crews.
>
> "And," declared Milch, "we will be able to render you all this help in the Leningrad area because this area has a border with Finland with which we, he said, have excellent relations."

This ties Primakov's testimony about Trotsky's role in planning an uprising in Leningrad together with the projected German role in the same uprising. A number of other defendants, both military

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[3] Some years ago we obtained a partial transcript of this address of Voroshilov's from a fellow researcher in Moscow. It is now published: *Voennyi sovet pri Narodnom Komissare Oborony SSSR. 1-4 iiunia 1937 g. Dokumenty i Materialy*. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008, pp. 367-423. Voroshilov's quotation from an as yet unpublished confession by Putna concerning General Milch is on pp. 384-5 of this published edition.

[4] See the article on Milch at http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erhard_Milch .

and civilian, confessed to discussions with German generals including von Rundstedt and Milch.

In a segment from an interrogation of May 21, 1937, Primakov said:

> . . . The bloc of Trotskyists and Rights and the organization of the common traitorous anti-Soviet military conspiracy led to the union of all the counterrevolutionary forces within the (Workers' and Peasants') Red Army . . . This anti-Soviet political bloc and military conspiracy, personally headed by the base fascist Trotsky, . . . [5]

Budennyi also reported, incidentally, that the military figures were not planning to accept the leadership of Trotsky or the Rights for very long.

> . . . KORK confessed that he was aware that the leaders of the military-fascist counterrevolutionary organization regarded their ties to Trotsky and the Rights as a temporary situation. TUKHACHEVSKY had spoken to KORK to the effect that the Trotskyists, Rights et al. were only temporary fellow-travelers, and when the armed *coup* had been effected he, TUKHACHEVSKY would play the role of Bonaparte. And on November 29, 1934, according to KORK's confession, TUKHACHEVSKY, in Kork's apartment, had stated this unequivocally to all those present.

Colonel Viktor Alksnis and the Transcript of the Tukhachevsky Trial

The transcript of the June 11, 1937, trial of Tukhachevsky and the seven other commanders has never been made public. Its text is

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[5] Iulia Kantor. *Voina i Mir Mikhaila Tukhachevskogo.* Moscow: Izdatel'skii Dom Ogoniok "Vremia", 2005, 374. (Kantor Voina)

still so top-secret in Russia that no researcher, no matter how trusted, is allowed to read it today. But in 1990, shortly before the end of the USSR General Viktor Alksnis, military leader, member of the Duma (Soviet Parliament), and grandson of one of the judges at this 1937 military trial, was given permission by the KGB (successor to the MVD – NKVD) to read the transcript.

Perhaps the KGB thought Alksnis would be sympathetic to the story that the military men had been framed. After all his own grandfather, Komandarm 2nd rank (= Lieutenant General) Iakov I. Alksnis had been arrested in November 1937 and then tried and executed as a conspirator in July 1938, only months after he had served as one of the judges in the military panel that judged Tukhachevsky and the rest.

Instead Alksnis, interviewed in a Russian journal in 2000 and again by researcher Vladimir L. Bobrov shortly afterwards, said that reading the trial transcript had forced him to reverse his opinion. He is now convinced that the conspiracy had in fact taken place. From the interview in the journal *Elementy* in 2000:

> My grandfather and Tukhachevsky were friends. And grandfather was on the judicial panel that judged both Tukhachevsky and Eideman. My interest in this case became even stronger after the well-known publications of [former] Procuror Viktorov, who wrote that Iakov Alksnis was very active at the trial, harassed the accused. . . .
>
> But in the trial transcript everything was just the opposite. Grandfather only asked two or three questions during the entire trial. But the strangest thing is the behavior of the accused. Newspaper accounts [of the Gorbachev-era – GF] claim that all the defendants denied their guilt completely. But according to the transcript they fully admitted their guilt. I realize that an admission of guilt itself can be the result of torture. But in the transcript it was something else entirely: a huge amount of detail, long dialogues, accusations of

one another, and a mass of precision. It's simply impossible to stage-manage something like this. . . . I know nothing about the nature of the conspiracy. But of the fact that there really did exist a conspiracy within the Red Army and that Tukhachevsky participated in it I am completely convinced today.

. . .

> It appears as though back there, in the 1930s, there stands some type of "cannon" that might be fired at us, at our times. And then everything could turn out completely differently. And in the meantime . . . in the meantime a certain conception of those events has been created, and everything is done to sustain that conception. (Alksnis)

Boris Alekseevich Viktorov was a military prosecutor who had been assigned to restudying the cases of military men convicted during the 1930s and of recommending "rehabilitations." His book of memoirs, *Bez grifa "sekretno." Zapiski voennogo prokurora* ("Stamp of Secrecy Removed: Notes of a Military Prosecutor") was a major work in Mikhail Gorbachev's campaign to "rehabilitate" almost everybody involved in the repressions of the 1930s. It was published in an edition of 200,000 copies, an enormous printing for a non-fiction book. Viktorov also published an article in the collection *Krovavy Marshal. Mikhail Tukhachevsky 1893-1937* (St Petersburg: KORONO-print, 1997). It is in this article that Viktorov claimed that General Ian Alksnis "especially" asked the accused questions (16).

Viktorov's accounts are certainly fraudulent. For example, he claims that the transcript of the Tukhachevsky trial "consisted of only a few pages in all." (14) Col. Alksnis describes a very lengthy transcript. Many other such passages in Viktorov's writings confirm that it is dishonest.

On August 13, 2000 Vladimir L. Bobrov interviewed Col. Alksnis about his reading of the Tukhachevsky trial transcript and what

about it forced him to change his mind and conclude that the military conspiracy really had existed. Here are some excerpts from this interview:

> Alksnis: . . . I turned the pages of the transcript and had more questions than answers. I came away with the impression that, obviously, there had really been a conspiracy. . . . But this is what struck me: in the transcript there are parts which attest to the sincerity of what the defendants said (no matter who claims that the trial was an organized show, that they worked on the defendants especially so that they would give the necessary confessions.)
>
> Imagine this. Let's say, Tukhachevsky is telling about a meeting with the German military attaché in a dacha near Moscow . . . and at that moment Primakov interrupts him and says "Mikhail Nikolaevich, you are mistaken. This meeting did not take place in your office at the dacha, but was on the veranda." I think that it would have been impossible to "direct" things such that Tukhachevsky said precisely that and that Primakov would then make a correction like that.
>
> Bobrov: Very well. But was there anything there that made you think that the trial had been scripted and directed anyway?
>
> Alksnis: No, it would have been impossible to script and direct a trial such as is in the transcript.
>
> Bobrov: That is, you wish to state that, having read the transcript, you did not find in it any traces of any kind of staging?
>
> Alksnis: Yes, yes. On top of that all of them confessed, and when they all admitted guilt in their last words, stating that they had been participants in the conspiracy and knowing that after that execution awaited

them, it is just impossible to imagine that they forced them all to make such admissions and declarations.

. . .

Bobrov: What was the main point of accusation of the "conspirators"?

Alksnis: Everything was there: espionage, preparation for a military *coup*, sabotage [wrecking]. . . .

Bobrov: And what does "espionage" mean? You were talking about the meeting at the dacha. . . .

Alksnis: Yes, yes, with the German military attaché. They were talking about arranging coordination with the German military, contacts were going on with them. . . .

Bobrov: One last question. In your interview with "Elementy" you talked about some kind of "cannon" that might shoot at our own times from back in the 30s. What did you have in mind?

Alksnis: If an objective research project on the events of those years were to be done, free of ideological dogmas, then a great deal could change in our attitude towards those years and towards the personalities of that epoch. And so it would be a "bomb" that would cause some problems. . . . (Bobrov)[6]

Assessing This Evidence

It is not surprising that the transcript of the Tukhachevsky trial is top-secret once again. As far as we can determine *no one* has been

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[6] Vladimir L. Bobrov, "Rasschifrovka audiozapisi besedy s deputatom V.I. Alksnisom." 13 avgusta 2000 g. Gosduma RF. 4 pp. My thanks to Vladimir Bobrov for providing me with this transcript.

permitted to read it since Alksnis. But we do have the Budennyi letter. It is by far the most direct evidence of the testimony given at the trial that we have. Alksnis' two accounts confirm the accuracy of Budennyi's account of the trial. For example, Alksnis confirms that the defendants confessed to all the charges and in some detail, something that Budennyi's letter also states.

It would be hard to overestimate the significance of Budennyi's testimony. There is no evidence to suggest or reason to believe that eight battle-hardened military men could have been forced to falsely confess at trial to such devastating charges, in such detail, and in the manner in which they did. Nor is there any evidence that they were forced to falsely confess in the first place, even before the trial.

Like the trial transcript itself, the letter remains top-secret. We located it in a little-known and disorganized archive and have published it, along with an introductory article in a Russia history journal.[7] For Budennyi as for Col. Alksnis there is no question at all of the guilt of the generals, all of whom confessed it and gave details. This is also the case with the published commentary by General Belov, another of the judges. Belov's letter to Voroshilov was published in 1996, presumably because he makes very few substantive remarks about the specific charges. But Belov was also convinced of the generals' guilt. We do not examine it here because Belov says nothing specifically about Trotsky and the Germans or Japanese.[8]

Significance of the Tukhachevsky Trial Evidence

The Budennyi letter to Voroshilov and Col. Alksnis' account of his reading the transcript of the "Tukhachevsky Affair" trial together

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[7] Bobrov and Furr, "Marshal S.M. Budennyi..."

[8] Belov, "Donesenie komanduiushchego voiskami Belorusskogo voennogo okruga I.P. Belova K.E. Voroshilovu... Smolensk, 14 iiulia 1937 g. Sovershenno sekretno Tol'ko lichno." In Antonella Christiani and Vera M. Mikhaileva, eds., *Repressii v Krasnoi Armii (30-e gody)*. Napoli, 1996, 192-198.

constitute one of the most important discoveries in the historiography of the Soviet Union. Thanks to them we now know as certainly as we will ever know that the military defendants in this trial were, in fact, guilty of what they confessed to.

This in itself completely dismantles the "anti-Stalin paradigm," the canonical interpretation of Soviet history. For example, it means that the testimony at the Third Moscow "show" trial, the March 1938 "Bukharin-Rykov" trial, was truthful insofar as it confirms the testimony given by Tukhachevsky and the other military men. It also confirms testimony about Trotsky's German and Japanese collaboration that was given by those defendants at the Second Moscow Trial of January 1937, the "Piatakov-Radek" trial, since that is also confirmed by the Tukhachevsky trial testimony.

If we had no corroborative evidence at all to this effect the testimony of the military figures would still be very strong. And we do have much other evidence. All of it is consistent with what we now know of the Tukhachevsky trial testimony. For our present purposes this is the strongest possible evidence that Trotsky was indeed conspiring with the Nazi government and German military.

Dreitser

The NKVD investigators of the 1930s referred to the interlocking conspiracy cases as the "klubok," or "tangle." This metaphor referred to the fact that the various separate conspiracies were intertwined with each other, at least on the leadership level. It also serves to illustrate how the NKVD "unraveled" them. Once one minor conspiracy was discovered it led by persistent investigation to others.

Efim Dreitser had been chief of Trotsky's bodyguard during the 1920s. He was a defendant at the first Moscow Trial of 1936 and claimed to be in personal contact with Trotsky. Dreitser named Putna at the 1936 Trial as a Trotskyist conspirator who also had direct links to Trotsky.

> At the end of the evening session of August 21, the accused Dreitzer, replying to questions put to him by Comrade Vyshinsky concerning certain details of the counter-revolutionary activities of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite centre, declares that one of the active participants in the terroristic work of the Trotskyites was Putna, an old and active Trotskyite. According to Dreitzer, Putna at one time ostensibly left the Trotskyites in pursuance of the line of double-dealing, but actually continued until quite recently to carry on strictly secret work for the Trotskyite centre. In particular, Dreitzer testifies that Putna had direct contact with Trotsky, met I. N. Smirnov, and in 1932 communicated to Smirnov, through Dreitzer, Trotsky's verbal instructions to organize terrorist groups. The accused Smirnov tries to deny the fact that Putna participated in the terroristic activity of the Trotskyites. However, in reply to questions put to them by Comrade Vyshinsky, the accused Pickel, Reingold and Bakayev corroborate Dreitzer's testimony. (1936 Trial, 116)

This was evidently just one of a number of bits of evidence that led to Putna's arrest, just as Kamenev's naming Radek, Sokol'nikov, Bukharin and others provided "threads" that led to the Second and Third Moscow Trials. Dreitser's investigation file confirms his confessions at trial and his close ties to Putna and Iakir, another of the later Tukhachevsky trial defendants. A close member of Dreitser's family and his only surviving relative has confirmed that her great-uncle Efim was indeed close to high-ranking Red Army men. Putna was well-known as a Trotskyist and was named by defendants in all three Moscow Trials, tried and executed as one of the eight military leaders in the Tukhachevsky Affair.[9]

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[9] Personal communication from Svetlana M. Chervonnaya, daughter of Dreitser's niece. Ms. Chervonnaya, an Americanist and skilled researcher on Cold-War history and Dreitser's only surviving relative, has been permitted to study Dreitser's investigative file.

Dmitry Shmidt, a military commander who was also arrested and questioned in 1936, testified to Putna's close and conspiratorial connection with Trotsky.

> In 1927 when I joined the Trotskyists I learned from DREITSER, OKHOTNIKOV and PUTNA that PUTNA was one of the members of the military center of the Trotskyist organization and was carrying out important organizational work in the Red Army. He was responsible for that work to Trotsky personally. In 1927 or 1928 PUTNA was assigned by the Revolutionary Military Council to be military attaché to Japan. At that time I had a meeting with PUTNA before his departure. He told me Trotsky used to come to his apartment to give him a whole series of instructions and tasks in connection with his going abroad.[10]

So the NKVD had other evidence, perhaps a lot of it, about Putna's activities. Concerning Shmidt's testimony specifically, it's difficult to imagine what foreign instructions, other than conspiratorial ones, Trotsky might have been giving Putna in 1927, since Trotsky had long since (January 1925) resigned from his military posts.

Kantor's Four Articles[11]

In 2005 Iulia Kantor, a journalist and a graduate student in history, published a series of articles and a book[12] on Marshal Tukhachevsky. Kantor does not investigate whether Tukhachevsky

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[10] "N.6. Z protokolu dopity D.A. Shmidta vid 31 serpnia 1936 r.," in Sergiy Kokin, Oleksandr Pshennikov, "Bez stroku davnosti," *Z Arkhiviv VUChK-GPU-NKVD-KGB* No. 1-2 (4/5), 1997 (In Ukrainian).

[11] Kantor's four articles were published in *Istoriia Gosudarstva i Prava* (2006). This legal journal is very hard to obtain outside of Russia. I have reformatted and republished the text of all four articles at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/kantor_4articles_igp06.pdf (Kantor 2006)

[12] Kantor, Iulia. *Voina i mir Mikhaila Tukhachevskogo*. Moscow: Izdatel'skii Dom *Ogoniok* "Vremia," 2005.

was guilty or not but, like Cherushev, takes it for granted that Tukhachevsky was the innocent victim of a frame-up by Stalin. It's probably no coincidence, therefore, that like Cherushev Kantor was granted access to some documentary materials which others have not been permitted to see including, in Kantor's case, some of the Tukhachevsky investigative materials. Additionally she claims that she was given permission by Tukhachevsky's family to see his investigative file – something that, until the 75-year period of declassification had expired, was strictly limited in Russia to next-of-kin and normally forbidden to all others, researchers included.

Kantor used these materials in her doctoral dissertation as well as her books and some articles. Anyone who studies only the texts of the primary sources that Kantor quotes without regard to her tendentious commentary will see that these sources strongly support Tukhachevsky's guilt. Some of these quotations involve Tukhachevsky's allegations concerning Trotsky.

No complete interrogations of Vitovt Putna have been published. Only excerpts from them have been published. We will briefly examine them below. But according to what we have of Tukhachevsky's testimony Putna was in direct contact with Trotsky and passed on to Tukhachevsky the information that he, Trotsky, had direct contacts with the German government and General Staff. This is consistent with what we've seen of Radek's testimony both before and during the January 1937 trial.

Tukhachevsky claimed to have been in direct contact by letter with Sedov through Putna.

> I inform the investigation that in 1935 Putna brought me a note from Sedov in which it said that Trotsky considers it very desirable that I establish closer ties with the Trotskyist commander cadres. Through Putna I orally answered with my agreement, and burned the note from Sedov. (Kantor 2006, 5; Kantor Voina, 378)

Tukhachevsky also said that in 1932 he received a "directive" from Trotsky to form a conspiratorial military organization, something he had been preparing to do in any case.

> Long before the creation of the antisoviet military-Trotskyist plot I grouped around myself, over the course of a number of years, men who were hostile to Soviet authority, dissatisfied with their positions as commanders, and conspired with them against the leadership of the Party and government. Therefore, when in 1932 I received a directive from Trotsky about the creation of an antisoviet organization in the army I already virtually had devoted cadres ready on whom I could rely in this work. (Kantor 2006, 5; Kantor Voina, 378-9)

According to Tukhachevsky Putna had direct contact with Trotsky concerning the latter's ties to the German government and General Staff and passed on news of this orally to Tukhachevsky.

> Putna told me orally that Trotsky had set up direct contact with the German fascist government and General Staff. (Kantor 2006, 5; Kantor, Voina, 378-9)

Tukhachevsky said that Vladimir Romm had told him that Trotsky was relying on Hitler's help in his struggle against Soviet power. We know from Romm's testimony at the 1937 Trial that Romm claimed to have been in direct contact with Trotsky.

> Romm told me that Trotsky is expecting Hitler to come to power and that he is counting on Hitler's aid in Trotsky's battle against Soviet authority. (Kantor 2006, 7; Kantor, Voina, 381)

Tukhachevsky reiterated that he had indeed had contact with Trotsky, and also that he himself had collaborated with German intelligence, though in the following passage he does not explicitly say that Trotsky had told him of his own German or Japanese connections.

> The transcript of the interrogation of the accused Tukhachevsky of June 9, 1937:
>
> I fully confirm my confessions given during the preliminary investigation concerning my leading participation in the military-Trotskyist plot, my ties to the Germans, and my past participation in anti-Soviet groupings. I admit my guilt in that I transmitted to German intelligence secret information and facts concerning the defense of the USSR. I also confirm my ties with Trotsky and Dombal'. (Kantor 2006, 15; Kantor, *Voina*, 406-7)

Assessing the Evidence: Kantor

Kantor received the permission of the Tukhachevsky family and the Russian government to gain access to *some* of the investigative materials for her long biography of Tukhachevsky. Though she does not admit as much, it seems that she was not permitted to read everything. Specifically it appears that she was not allowed to read the transcript of the trial of Tukhachevsky and the rest.[13] If she had read it and yet completely omitted its contents from her articles and book Kantor would be guilty not just of being guided by her own preconceived ideas, but of gross deception. She is guilty of deceiving her readers in any case, since she never tells us what she was permitted to see and what was kept from her.

Kantor takes the official position that the Marshal and all the other military figures were innocent victims of a frame-up. Therefore she would surely have cited any evidence that this was so. But she is unable to cite any. This is very significant, since it strongly suggests that no such evidence exists in the materials to which she was permitted access. Since the whole thrust of Kantor's work is to try to demonstrate the innocence of Tukhachevsky (and, by extension, of all of his codefendants), it appears that she had no such

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[13] The trial transcript might not be in the investigative file.

evidence before her. Kantor also ignores some of the evidence that they were guilty – notably, some already well-known to researchers because it is in the Shvernik Report, which has been published (see below).

The passages Kantor quotes strongly support all the other evidence we have cited. We have only quoted the passages from Kantor's work that directly inculpate Trotsky with Germany. The reliability of their testimony concerning Trotsky's collaboration with the Germans is predicated upon the truthfulness of the rest of their testimony – that is, upon their guilt. Kantor is committed to asserting the innocence of all these men rather than to investigating whether they were guilty or not. But the evidence she quotes, as opposed to her tendentious commentary on it, gives strong evidence of their guilt. This is also strong evidence that they told the truth about their collaboration with Trotsky and his with Germany.

Tukhachevsky's Confessions

In 1994 the texts of two of Tukhachevsky's confessions were published in Russia. In them Tukhachevsky repeats that Romm told him Trotsky was relying on Hitler. As we saw above Romm confessed to having been a courier between Trotsky and conspirators within the USSR.[14]

> . . . Romm also passed on that it was Trotsky's hope that Hitler would come to power and would support him, Trotsky, in his struggle against Soviet power. (Main, 159; *Molodaia Gvardiia* (henceforth MG) 9 (1994), 133) (Evidently the same passage as above.)

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[14] These confessions of Tukhachevsky's have been translated and published in Steven J. Main, "The Arrest and 'Testimony' of Marshal of the Soviet Union M.N. Tukhachevsky (May-June 1937)," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 10, No. 1 (March 1997), 151-195. All the passages dealing with Trotsky were published in *Molodaia Gvardiia* issues 9 and 10 of 1994. We have used Main's English text for the convenience of readers and made silent corrections in a few places where we disagreed with Main's translation, which we have compared with the originals.

Tukhachevsky repeats that he had told Kork (another of the eight defendants) that he had had contact with Trotsky and the Rights.

> I told Kork that I had links both with Trotsky and the Rightists and tasked him to recruit new members in the Moscow military district. . . . (Main, 160; MG 9, 134)

According to Tukhachevsky Putna, another of the eight defendants and, as we have already seen, a long-standing supporter of Trotsky's, admitted to him in 1933 that he was in touch with Trotsky as well as with I.N. Smirnov, the leaders of the clandestine Trotskyist underground within the USSR. Putna later received an appointment as military attaché (in 1934, as attaché to Great Britain) and so was assigned to be the contact person between Trotsky and the other conspirators.

> Upon Putna's and Gorbachev's return from the Far East – I believe this was in 1933 – I spoke with each of them separately. Putna quickly admitted that he was already in contact with Trotsky and with Smirnov. I suggested to him to join the ranks of the military-Trotskyite conspiracy, telling him that I had direct links with Trotsky. Putna immediately agreed [to join]. Later, following his appointment as military attaché, he was tasked to maintain the link between Trotsky and the center of the anti-Soviet military-Trotskyite conspiracy. (Main 160; MG 9, 134)

Tukhachevsky said that in 1933 or 1934 Romm had instructions from Trotsky that the "German fascists" would help the Trotskyists, and so the military conspirators should help both the German and the Japanese General Staffs in sabotage, diversions, and assassinations against members of the Soviet government. Tukhachevsky said he passed "Trotsky's instructions" to the conspiratorial leadership, implying that he himself accepted them.

> Round about this time, 1933/1934, Romm visited me in Moscow and told me that he had to pass on Trot-

> sky's new instructions. Trotsky pointed out that it was no longer feasible to restrict our activities to simply recruiting and organizing cadres, that it was necessary to adopt a more active program, that German Fascism would render the Trotskyists assistance in their struggle with Stalin's leadership and that therefore the military conspiracy must supply the German General Staff with intelligence data, as well as working hand in glove with the Japanese General Staff, carrying out disruptive activities in the army, prepare diversions and terrorist acts against members of the government. These instructions of Trotsky I communicated to the center of our conspiracy. (Main, 160-161; MG 9, 134)

In another part of this published confession Tukhachevsky asserts that he got other instructions from Trotsky via Piatakov, rather than through Romm, Putna, or directly to himself.

> During the winter of 1935/1936, Pyatakov told me that Trotsky had now asked us to ensure the [future] defeat of the USSR in war, even if this meant giving the Ukraine to the Germans and the Primor'ye to the Japanese. In order to prepare the USSR's defeat, all forces, both within the USSR and outside the USSR would have to be made ready; in particular, Pyatakov stated that Trotsky would carry out a decisive struggle to plant his people in the Comintern. Pyatakov stated that such conditions would mean the restoration of capitalism in the country.
>
> As we received Trotsky's instructions on unleashing a campaign of sabotage activity, espionage, diversionary and terrorist activity, the center of the conspiracy, which included not only me, but also Feld'man, Eide-man, Kamenev,[15] Primakov, Uborevich, Iakir and those

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[15] This means Army Commander, 1st rank (= General) Sergei Sergeevich Kamenev.

> closely associated with it, Gamarnik and Kork, issued various instructions to the members of the conspiracy, based on Trotsky's directives. (Main, 163; MG 10, 257)

Tukhachevsky claims that he also received direct written instructions via Putna from Sedov, who was passing on Trotsky's instructions. Putna assured him that Trotsky had established direct ties to the German government and General Staff.

> In the autumn of 1935, Putna came to my office and handed over a note from Sedov, in Trotsky's name, insisting that I more energetically attract Trotskyite cadres to the military conspiracy and more actively use them. I told Putna to say that this would be done. In addition, Putna told me that Trotsky had established direct links with Hitler's government and the General Staff, and that the center of the anti-Soviet military Trotskyite conspiracy should task itself to prepare defeats on those fronts where the German Army would operate.
>
> During the winter of 1935/1936, as I have already mentioned, I had a talk with Pyatakov, during which the latter passed on another directive from Trotsky [to the effect] to ensure the unconditional defeat of the USSR in war with Hitler and Japan, as well as the break-up of the Ukraine and the Primor'ye from the USSR. These instructions meant that it was necessary to establish ties with the Germans in order to define where they intended to deploy their armies and where necessary to prepare the defeats of the Soviet armies. (Main, 166; MG 10, 261)

This passage in Tukhachevsky's published confession confirms what Budennyi reported to Voroshilov in his letter of June 26, 1937. Evidently Tukhachevsky restated this at the trial and inserted a comment that von Rundstedt must have known this information through Trotsky.

> At the end of January 1936, I had to travel to London to attend the funeral of the British King. During the funeral procession, first by foot and then on the train, General Rundstedt – the head of the German government's military delegation – spoke to me. It was obvious that the German General Staff had already been informed by Trotsky. Rundstedt openly told me that the German General Staff was aware that I stood at the head of a military conspiracy in the Red Army and that he, Rundstedt, had been instructed to begin talks about matters of mutual interest. (Main, 166; MG 10, 261)

A few pages later Tukhachevsky puts Trotsky's and Rundstedt's instructions together.

> Taking into account Trotsky's directive to prepare for defeat on that front where the Germans would attack, as well as General Rundstedt's instruction to prepare for defeat on the Ukrainian front, I proposed to Iakir to make the German task easier by diversionary-sabotage tactics leading to the fall of the Letichev fortified region, the commandant of which was a member of the conspiracy, Sablin. (Main, 185; MG 10, 264)

Assessing the Evidence: Tukhachevsky's Confessions

Only a few of Tukhachevsky's confessions have been made public. We are fortunate to have any of them at all. They were published in the early 1990s when the promise of *glasnost'* ("openness") was still in the air. In 2006 one confession of Nikolai Ezhov's was published. Ezhov confirmed the existence of several groups of military conspirators including that around Tukhachevsky. Ezhov also named some, at least, of the German military figures with whom

they and he himself were jointly in touch.[16] To that extent Ezhov's and Tukhachevsky's confessions mutually confirm each other.

Frinovskii strongly confirmed the guilt of the Rightists, including Bukharin, some of whom, like Grin'ko, claimed direct conspiratorial contact with Trotsky. Others, like Bukharin, claimed indirect knowledge of Trotsky's dealings with the Germans through Radek.

Other Documents of the "Tukhachevsky Affair": The "Shvernik Report"

During the 22nd Party Congress in October 1961 Nikita Khrushchev and his supporters in the Soviet leadership leveled an even stronger attack against Stalin than Khrushchev's 1956 "Secret Speech" had been. After the Congress Stalin's body was removed from Lenin's tomb and a new wave of materials attacking Stalin and those closely associated with him was published. This anti-Stalin campaign – for so it may be called – ended shortly after Khrushchev was removed from office at the Central Committee meeting of October 1964 by Leonid Brezhnev and others.

In early 1962 the Presidium (formerly the Politburo, in effect Khrushchev himself) authorized a blue-ribbon commission to investigate the trials and executions of the 1930s and especially the so-called Tukhachevsky Affair.[17] This commission seems to have had total access to all the investigative and other materials concerning the repressions of the 1930s. Its purpose seems to have been to find further information for attacks on Stalin and his supporters, and justificatory materials for further "rehabilitations." In fact, it provided little if any exculpatory evidence but quite a bit of further evidence that the accused were guilty.

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[16] English translation at https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/ezhov042639eng.html Russian original online at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/ezhovru.html ; also now at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/58654 .

[17] There had been an earlier commission, called the "Molotov Commission." We discuss it later in the present chapter.

The report was issued in two parts. The *Zapiska* (memorandum) devoted mainly to the Military Purges and Tukhachevsky Affair was issued in 1963. A further part, the *Spravka* (= information, report), is dated 1964. Neither seems to have been used by Khrushchev or given to Soviet writers to promote Khrushchev's "line."

The Shvernik Reports were both published after the end of the USSR in *Voennyi Arkhivy Rossii,* a journal dated 1993 that never had another issue. Since that time the Reports have been published several more times and are readily available. It's fair to say that these reports constitute the largest single published collection of excerpts and quotations from investigative materials of the 1930s repressions.

We cite here all the passages from the Shvernik Commission reports that bear directly on the specific topic of this book: Trotsky's purported collaboration with Germany and Japan. There are a great many other passages, both in these reports and elsewhere in the available investigative materials, that bear on Trotsky's involvement in the general opposition conspiracies, for example to assassinate Stalin and others. Since these allegations are not the subject of our present study we will not consider them here.

From the "Zapiska:"[18]

> On March 25, 1936, Iagoda informed Stalin that Trotsky was giving directives through agents of the Gestapo to Trotskyists inside the USSR about carrying out terrorist activity, and that even in prisons Trotskyists were trying to create militant terrorist groups and that the leader of the Trotskyists in the USSR was I.N. Smirnov. (*Zapiska*, 557)

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[18] This long report has not previously been translated. We take it from *RKEB 2* 541-670. It is available for download at http://perpetrator2004.narod.ru/documents/Great_Terror/Shvernik_Report.rar. The *Spravka* alone is also available online at the Russian language Wikisource resource in nine parts at http://tinyurl.com/spravka. It is in *RKEB 2* 671-788.

. . .

The sentence of the court states that Tukhachevsky and the other defendants, "being leaders of an anti-Soviet military-fascist organization, have violated their military duty (oath), have betrayed their country, have established ties with military circles in Germany and with enemy of the people L. Trotsky and according to their directives have prepared the defeat of the Red Army in the event of an attack on the USSR by foreign aggressors, specifically, of fascist Germany, and with the goal of destroying the defensive capability of the USSR have engaged in espionage and sabotage in the units of the Red Army and in enterprises of military significance, and also have been preparing terrorist acts against the leaders of the AUCP(b) and the Soviet government." (605)

In the indictment it is asserted that in April-May 1937 the organs of the NKVD discovered and liquidated in the city of Moscow a military-Trotskyist conspiracy, in the "center" of leadership of which were Gamarnik, Tukhachevsky, Iakir, Uborevich, Kork, Eideman and Fel'dman. The military-Trotskyist organization, of which all those accused in this case were members, was formed in 1932-1933 upon the direct instructions of the German general staff and of Trotsky. It was connected with the Trotskyist center and the Bukharin-Rykov group of Rightists, was involved in sabotage, diversions, terror, and was preparing the overthrow of the government and the seizure of power with the aim of restoring capitalism in the USSR. (688)

Iakir's address at the court trial in connection with the plots of the organizers, set the line for the other defendants also to expose the machinations of Trotsky and of the fascist governments against the USSR, and in addition emphasized the role of Tukhachevsky in the conspiracy in every way. (690)

Tukhachevsky was also forced to confirm . . . in court: "When in 1932 Romm brought me Trotsky's proposal to gather the Trotskyist cadres, I agreed to do this. Therefore I consider the beginning of the organization of our military conspiracy to have been 1932." (695)

Putna testified about Tukhachevsky's ties with Sedov and Trotsky. Specifically, he declared during the investigation that, finding himself in London in September 1935 and learning that he was being summoned to Moscow, he reported about this to Sedov, Trotsky's son, in Paris. From Sedov he received by special delivery a package in which were a note from Sedov to Putna and a "letter of recommendation, written and signed personally by Trotsky" for Tukhachevsky. Putna carried out Sedov's task and during the first days of October 1935 supposedly handed Tukhachevsky Trotsky's letter. Tukhachevsky familiarized himself with the letter and asked Putna to "transmit orally that Trotsky could count on him."

"Already in 1928 I [Tukhachevsky] was brought into the Rightist organization by Enukidze. In 1934 I personally made contact with Bukharin. I established espionage ties with the Germans in 1925, when I used to travel to Germany for study and maneuvers. . . . On my trip to London in 1936 Putna arranged for me a meeting with Sedov. . . I was connected in this conspiracy with Fel'dman, S.S. Kamenev, Iakir, Eideman, Enukidze, Bukharin, Karakhan, Pyatakov, I.N. Smirnov, Iagoda, Osepian and a number of others." (681-2)

. . . the investigation obtained their [Tukhachevsky's and Putna's] "admissions" of a personal meeting with Sedov, supposedly arranged for Tukhachevsky by Putna in 1936 in a café in Paris. Meanwhile detailed information about Tukhachevsky's stay in Paris from February 10 to 16, 1936, came from Ventsov, Soviet military attaché to France, and from the organs of the

NKVD, but this information contained nothing about his meeting with Sedov. In the course of the present verification Afanas'ev, a former worker of the Foreign Section of the NKVD, member of the CPSU since 1923, expatiated upon this matter:

> "Between 1932 and 1938 I was continuously in illegal work abroad. I headed the illegal resident bureau in Paris which mainly worked on the activities of Trotsky's son Sedov and his circle. . . . We were up to date on the most secret conspiratorial activity of Trotsky and Sedov. Therefore when you pose me the question of whether meetings between Sedov and Tukhachevskŷ, Putna, and other military figures of the Soviet Union could have taken place, I can assert that that could not be true . . . the agent reports and documentary materials we obtained in the process of our work on Trotsky, Sedov, Kleman and in part on the ROVS in Paris do not confirm either directly or indirectly the accusations that were brought against the military figures of the Red Army in connection with the case of Tukhachevsky, Kork, Gamarnik, Putna, and others." (695-696)

The language of the Shvernik Report makes it clear that its authors proceeded on the preconceived assumption that no such conspiracy existed. It was designed to provide "evidence" – likely-looking materials – for citation in further "rehabilitations." Soviet historians and researchers, as we have seen, were not to be permitted access to the archives themselves.

In the case of Tukhachevsky's alleged meeting with Sedov in the Paris café in 1936 the Report cites Ventsov, Soviet military attaché to France, who reported nothing about it. Ventsov-Krants had been very close to Trotsky. According to an archival document cited by Cherushev he had helped Trotsky write the book *How the Revolu-*

tion Armed Itself.[19] The report also cites an undated "former worker of the Foreign division of the NKVD" named Afanas'ev – no first name or patronymic are given – who claimed that Soviet intelligence in France were closely following information about Sedov and Trotsky and knew nothing about any such meeting or any of the activities mentioned in the Tukhachevsky case.

It's worth making several points here. First, the fact that Ventsov and Afanas'ev were told nothing about such a meeting cannot prove that such a meeting never took place. It only means that they claim they did not know of it. Afanas'ev's claim that Soviet intelligence knew about "the most secret conspiratorial activities of Trotsky and Sedov," and so knew that Sedov could not have met with Tukhachevsky, is empty for another reason. At or shortly after the time of the alleged meeting – late January or early February 1936 – Soviet intelligence man Mark Zborowski became Leon Sedov's closest confidant. We have Zborowski's reports back to Moscow. But Zborowski himself was not privy to all of Sedov's secrets, and did not accompany him everywhere. Zborowski's handwritten notes and reports are in the archives and have been published, while we do not even know Afanas'ev's name. So the claim that Soviet intelligence knew about all Trotsky's and Sedov's "most secret conspiratorial activities" cannot be true.

Rudenko's Letter to Molotov

On April 13, 1956, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU passed a decree establishing a commission to be chaired by V.M. Molotov to study the materials of the "public trials."[20] The commission proved unsatisfactory to all concerned. It was sharply divided between the three men who had been closest to Stalin and the majority, who were Khrushchev's people. On December 10, 1956, it issued a compromise report exonerating Tukhachevsky

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[19] N.S. Cherushev. *1937 god. Elita Krasnoi Armii na golgofe*. Moscow: Veche, 2003, p. 208.

[20] *Reabilitatsiia. Kak Eto Bylo*. T. 2, No. 4, p. 70. Tukhachevsky was included even though his trial had not been public.

and the military men but refusing to consider rehabilitating any of the defendants in the public trials.[21] Since we know that Molotov continued to be firmly convinced of Tukhachevsky's guilt we can assume this was, indeed, a compromise. In 1957 Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich were dismissed from the Presidium for having attempted to remove Khrushchev from office.

The Molotov Commission did study a lot of materials, but only some of their documents have been made public. We will quote below from a report dated June 10, 1956, to that commission from Rudenko, the General Prosecutor of the USSR. Rudenko was a staunch supporter of Khrushchev. It was his office that would have to issue recommendations to the Soviet Supreme Court to get convictions reversed, the legal aspect of "rehabilitation."

Rudenko's report has not been published, although at some point it was obtained by *Krasnaia Zvezda* ("Red Star"), which is the military daily newspaper in Russia today as it was during Soviet times. Still not published, a copy of it was obtained from that source in 2002 by my Moscow colleague Vladimir L. Bobrov, and we reproduce portions of it here. Once again, we reproduce only quotations that deal with the question of Trotsky and Germany/Japan, ignoring other aspects of this important document.

> Only on May 15, almost ten months after his arrest, after confessions about the military conspiracy had been obtained from Medvedev, were confessions also obtained from Putna about his counterrevolutionary ties with Tukhachevsky. **At this interrogation Putna confessed that in September 1935 he received Trotsky's directive concerning the attraction to the Trotskyist organization of high-ranking military men. Trotsky also declared that he was aware that Tukhachevsky and S.S. Kamenev were already**

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[21] *RKEB 2,* 204-207; available online at http://perpetrator2004.narod.ru/documents/kirov/Molotov_ Commission_Memo.doc

carrying out counterrevolutionary work in the army, and that it was essential to contact them. With this Trotsky handed him a note for Tukhachevsky, in which he proposed that he [Tukhachevsky] unite with the Trotskyist center for mutual counterrevolutionary activity. In October 1935 he [Putna] handed this note to Tukhachevsky, who accepted this proposal of Trotsky's.

In January 1936 he informed Trotsky of the existence of a Trotskyist military organization and its center consisting of Primakov, Putna, and Dreitser, about the connections of this organization and about recruitment.

...

At his interrogation of June 2, 1937, Putna had already confessed that in the spring of 1931 he had established espionage ties with the German G[eneral] S[taff] and at various times gave the Germans, through their generals Nedavmeister[22] (?), Adam, and Bokkel'berg, information about the military staff of the Red army, its organizational structure and location of its forces, about armaments and the system of military readiness. It is not apparent from these interrogations precisely what information Putna transmitted.

Putna declared moreover that in 1936 at the time of his and Tukhachevsky's trip together to England Tukhachevsky compared the relationship of forces and proved to him that the defeat of the USSR in a war

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[22] This is probably German General Oskar von Niedermayer, who worked for the Reichswehr (German military) in an intelligence capacity in Moscow in the early 1930s, having formally resigned from the military. He was a General again during World War II, was captured after the War by the Soviets, tried and sentenced to 25 years in prison, and died shortly thereafter in 1948.

with Germany was inevitable. **And that he, Putna, agreed with Tukhachevsky and said to him that for the swiftest defeat of Soviet forces it was essential to act together on the side of the Trotskyist organization.** However Putna did not confess how Tukhachevsky reacted to this.

Fel'dman also confessed that from Tukhachevsky's words he [Fel'dman] was aware that he [Tukhachevsky] had an agreement with Pyatakov concerning a disruption in the supply of artillery, **and also maintained a connection with Trotsky, from whom he was receiving directives concerning counter-revolutionary activity.** From his [Tukhachevsky's] own words Fel'dman learned that Egorov, commander of the VTSIK School was preparing a "palace coup," but Tukhachevsky said that Egorov was an indecisive person and unsuitable for this purpose. In addition this School was being moved out of the Kremlin and therefore a more realistic plan for the seizure of power – as Tukhachevsky averred – was defeat of the Red army in the future war, and an armed uprising.

... But at this point Tukhachevsky declared that Putna and Primakov did not trust him politically very much, that during their trips to Moscow Primakov gave the military center information but avoided conversations with Tukhachevsky on this topic. **That Primakov and Putna had private ties through their Trotskyist centers and were maintaining contact with Trotsky. Tukhachevsky declared that he personally did not share Trotskyist views and further admitted that in 1936 he had received a note from Sedov in which the latter in Trotsky's name proposed [that Tukhachevsky] proceed to join with the Trotskyist cadres in the Red army in order to prepare the seizure of power.**

... At the beginning of the interrogation Tukhachevsky confessed that he had not met in person with either Trotsky or Sedov after their exile from the Soviet Union. **But at the end of the interrogation he declared that in 1932, when he was at the maneuvers of the German army, he had established a personal connection with Trotsky and had reached an agreement about carrying on Trotskyist work in the Red Army.**

... On that same day, May 27, 1937, Tukhachevsky signed the transcript of an interrogation in which he admitted to his leading role in the military conspiracy, but these confessions differ significantly from those he had given earlier. In these confessions **Tukhachevsky said nothing about personal ties with Trotsky and affirmed that he maintained ties with Trotsky through Romm and Primakov. That it was through them that he received Trotsky's directive that it was essential to go over to terrorist methods of work,** about which Tukhachevsky had not confessed earlier.

Iona Iakir, another of the Tukhachevsky defendants:

In 1933 Tukhachevsky, who knew about my waverings on questions of the Party's policy in the village, and about my ties to former Trotskyists, after first feeling me out, **informed me that he was connected with Trotsky, according to whose directive he was organizing a military conspiracy and proposed that I take part in it.** I gave Tukhachevsky my agreement, after which he said to me that he was at the head of the conspiracy, that there was a military center whose staff he proposed that I join. I agreed to become part of the staff of the center. In this conversation Tukhachevsky informed me that Uborevich, with whom he had recently had a conversation on this subject, was also in the center of the military conspiracy. **Tukhachevsky spoke about a directive of Trotsky's**

that he had recently received and in which the following tasks were placed before the center of the military conspiracy:

1. The organization of a coup in Moscow, in the Ukraine, and in a number of other places in the Soviet Union with the aim of seizing power.

2. In the event that the coup d'état was unsuccessful, to organize the defeat of the Red army in a war with the Polish-German bloc and to organize the theater of military operations and the armies accordingly.

3. To organize sabotage in the RKKA [Workers' and Peasants' Red Army] in both material-technical and military preparations.

4. **Independently of Trotsky's direct ties with the German General Staff and the fascist government,** it was important for the military center to organize these ties independently.

Analysis of Rudenko's Letter

Rudenko summarized details from some interrogations of Putna, Tukhachevsky, and Iakir that have not been made public. These passages tie Trotsky to collaboration with Germany in several ways:

* Putna, the leading Trotskyist among the military men, claimed he had been in touch with Trotsky; was involved in a Trotskyist military organization; and was conspiring with the German General Staff.

* Tukhachevsky confirmed that Primakov and Putna were in touch with Trotsky, as he himself was, and that he and the Trotskyist cadres were working together.

* According to Iakir, Tukhachevsky had said that the military conspiracy was being organized in coordination with Trotsky and "according to his directive."

* Iakir confirmed that the military conspirators were to work for the defeat of the Red Army in a war with Germany and Poland.

* Iakir said that Trotsky had direct ties with the German General Staff.

The richness and consistency of this material suggests that there is yet more evidence in the investigation materials of the Tukhachevsky group of Trotsky's contacts with Germany.

Voroshilov's Talk at the Commissariat of Defense

From the same source we have obtained a copy of the transcript (*stenogramma*) of a talk by Commissar of Defense Voroshilov to the top military personnel (*aktiv*) of the Commissariat (= Ministry) of Defense on June 9, 1937.[23] Voroshilov read out quotations from interrogations and court documents of the Tukhachevsky Affair.

Some of those quotations are not given in the transcript, or are given only partially. We will use what we have, and will only cite those quotations that deal directly with Trotsky and his alleged ties to either Germany or Japan or that confirm the information in Rudenko's report.

> TRANSCRIPT OF THE ACTIV OF THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT OF DEFENSE USSR
>
> June 9, 1937
>
> Both PUTNA and all the rest of them tell about how they linked their work with the principal scoundrel

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[23] We have already cited a short passage from this document above in connection with the question of General Milch.

and main gunman of counterrevolution in our country who was driven out of this country – Trotsky.

Here is what PUTNA says:

"– When I found out (he was saying this to the investigator) that I was being recalled to Moscow in the last days of September 1935 I reported about this to Sedov." (reads PUTNA's confessions)

They [the investigators] asked him this question: "Was Trotsky's letter handed to Tukhachevsky, when and under what circumstances?"

Answer: "Trotsky's letter was handed to Tukhachevsky." (reads)

What Tukhachevsky says about this. They asked him this question: "When did you establish contact with Trotsky and what directives did you receive from him?"

Answer: "I established contact with Trotsky through Romm in 1932." The latter brought him a note in 1935 too. Obviously this was not the first note.

"In 1932 . . ." (reads) Further he relates what Romm said to him. "Everything that he reported I approved, then I met with him in 1933 and 1934. When in fact the anti-Soviet work in the army had already been developed by me there took place my second meeting with Romm in Moscow ..." (reads)

That's what Tukhachevsky says about his contacts with Trotsky and about those tasks which the latter set before him.

Here you see it's not just a question of Trotsky's assigning tasks on his own account, but Trotsky at the same time has instructions also from the German General Staff. I have information that it is not only the

German General Staff that has influence on Trotsky, but that the latter was connected to the Japanese General Staff as well, or in any case with its intelligence organs.

Primakov answers the question what tasks were set before him and what he did:

"Trotsky's basic directives . . . were known to me too from the words of Dreitser and Putna; they came down to this, that Trotsky was demanding to reestablish a military organization, to strengthen it in the army as well, making use of the sharpening of the class struggle . . . up to 1933."

. . .

Putna about his spying: "A few days later" (reads) . . . Then while conversations went on: "about the desirability of changing the system, the leadership in the USSR . . . ." (reads)

That means that preparatory conversations were going on, and then further: "Shleikher expressed his unequivocal readiness . . . ." (reads) He brought this to Trotsky's attention through this gentleman Sedov and Sedov reports that Trotsky proposes: (reads)[24]

The testimony here generally accords with what we have seen previously, no doubt because Voroshilov drew his information from the same interrogations. The "Shleikher" named here is no doubt General Kurt von Schleicher, Chancellor of Germany from June 1932 to January 1933 and previously Minister of Defense.

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[24] *Voenniy Sovet pri Narodnom Komissare Oborony SSSR. 1-4 iiunia 1937 g. Dokumenty i Materialy.* Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008, 372-373; 384. (Voennyi Sovet).

Colonel L.A. Shnitman

Further evidence about contacts between the military conspirators and Trotsky keeps coming to light, even in sources that try to impugn its validity. In a 2009 book we read the following:

> In September 1937 Ezhov sent Stalin a special communication containing an assessment of the activities of Colonel L.A. Shnitman, military attaché to Czechoslovakia. There was compromising material stating that he was aide to Komandarm 2nd rank A.I. Kork, military attaché to Germany. In January 1937 a group of Soviet pilots who had served in Spain had been detained in France, and Shnitman was also blamed for this. During his interrogation he had also told the investigators about his "meetings" upon Tukhachevsky's instructions in Paris with Sedov, Trotsky's son, concerning the transmission of secret information to foreign intelligence services.[25]

That Khaustov and Samuel'son include this material at all is apparently part of their attempt to illustrate the unreliability of such reports. The scare quotes around the word "meetings" are an example of the dishonest "argument by scare quotes." Instead of citing evidence for their implied suspicion that Shnitman had not met with Sedov, Khaustov and Samuel'son put scare quotes around the word. This is a common tactic of proponents of the anti-Stalin paradigm when they have no evidence to support their preconceived ideas but rather are forced to contend with contrary evidence. An objective historian would cite evidence and, if there were no such evidence, conclude that the meetings might well have taken place. Since such an admission would contradict the

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[25] Vladimir Khaustov and Lennart Samuel'son. *Stalin, NKVD, i Repressii 1936-1938 gg.* "Istoriia Stalinizma" series. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009 226. (Khaustov-Samuel'son)

anti-Stalin paradigm, Khaustov and Samuel'son use this subterfuge. We have discussed "argument by scare quotes" elsewhere.[26]

Evaluating This Evidence

As with a great many other statements in this book the authors give no citation, not even an archival source, for this information. What are we to make of this?

Both authors are extremely anticommunist and very hostile to Stalin. They reject out of hand any possibility that any of the Opposition conspiracies actually existed. Their book contains many falsifications, significant omissions, and outright lies, all in an anticommunist direction. Moreover, Khaustov is associated with the "Memorial" organization. He is one of a few privileged researchers who have access to many archival documents.

Another "Memorial" society source reports that Shnitman was convicted of "espionage [and] participation in a military conspiracy in the Red Army."[27] This is what we would expect if Shnitman did confess as Khaustov and Samuel'son affirm. Yet another source confirms that Shnitman was aide to the military attaché to Germany in 1926-1929 and again in 1934-35, was military attaché to Finland in 1929-30 and military attaché to Czechoslovakia 1936-1938.[28]

The date of Ezhov's memorandum to Stalin as given by Khaustov and Samuel'son, September 1937, is curious. There's good evidence from other sources that Shnitman was arrested on January 14, 1938, and that his trial and execution took place on August 28,

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[26] Furr. *Kirov* Chapter 4, 87-92.

[27] "Kommunarka. 1938. Avgust." At http://www.memo.ru/memory/communarka/Chapt10.htm ; "Spiski zhertv" http://lists.memo.ru/d37/f245.htm#n43 . These are both "Memorial Society" sources.

[28] http://baza.vgd.ru/1/38052/ .

1938.[29] One would expect that an interrogation in which Shnitman made such self-incriminating disclosures would almost certainly have taken place between these two dates rather than prior to Ezhov's September 1937 communication to Stalin. Surely no one who had confessed to such crimes would have been left at large for another four months. That deduction in turn suggests that Khaustov and Samuel'son saw not just Ezhov's note to Stalin but at least part of Shnitman's investigative file and are not being truthful about the content of Ezhov's note.

The "foreign intelligence service" for which Sedov and, through Shnitman, Tukhachevsky were spying is not named. But it must have been Germany. Tukhachevsky had ties with the German General Staff about which he confessed at length, as we have seen, while Shnitman had had some connection to Germany but not to any other of the great European powers.

In a book of more than 400 pages the authors devote only this single paragraph to Shnitman's case. Indeed, there is no particular reason they should have inserted this paragraph at all other than to impugn internal communications among the Soviet leaders. But the implication nevertheless is that there may be still more – perhaps much more – evidence of contact between Trotsky or Sedov and Germany or Japan, to say nothing of Trotsky's contacts with Soviet oppositionists.

Other Evidence from the Soviet Archives of Trotsky's Collaboration

To this point we have confined our attention to documents from the former Soviet archives containing evidence of "first-hand" contact between Trotsky and Germany or Japan. The persons whose accounts we have examined claim that they knew of Trotsky's con-

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[29] O.F. Suvenirov. *Tragediia RKKA 1937-1938*. Institut Voennoi Istorii Ministerstva Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Moscow: "Terra," 1998, 441, No. 262.

tact with Germany or Japan either from Trotsky himself or from German or Japanese diplomats.

Although the dividing line between first- and second-hand evidence is a clear one, the evidentiary value of second-hand evidence is not necessarily less. For example we now have Nikolai Bukharin's first confession of June 2, 1937, a document still top-secret in Russia today that turned up in an archive that was sent West sometime in the mid-1990s. We have examined this confession in detail in another study to which we refer the interested reader. [30]

It is significant because Bukharin confirms what we have already learned from Radek's testimony, since Bukharin's knowledge of Trotsky's collaboration with Germany came only through Radek. Radek had implicated Bukharin in pretrial statements and then again at the public January 1937 Moscow trial. Bukharin had denied over and over again what Radek said, but on June 2, 1937 he reversed himself and confessed.

Why did Bukharin decide to confess? It appears that one reason may have been that Bukharin had learned of Tukhachevsky's arrest, and figured "the jig was up."[31] In his final statement at the March 1938 Moscow Trial Bukharin said that "of course, the incriminating evidence [*uliki*]" played a determining role. That must mean evidence *recently* obtained and shown to him, which would probably include the evidence of the military conspirators.

If Bukharin's testimony contradicted Radek's we would be forced to conclude that, on the evidence, one or both were wrong. Since

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[30] Grover Furr and Vladimir L. Bobrov, "Nikolai Bukharin's First Statement of Confession in the Lubianka." *Cultural Logic* 2007, at http://clogic.eserver.org/2007/Furr_Bobrov.pdf This article was first published in the Russian historical journal *Klio* 1 (36), 2005, 38-52. I have put the Russian version online at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/furrnbobrov_bukharin_klio07.pdf

[31] See Grover Furr and Vladimir Bobrov, "Nikolai Bukharin's First Statement of Confession in the Lubianka." *Cultural Logic* 2007, 17 and nn. 32 and 33. Bibliographic information of the Russian original of this article is given there.

Bukharin's statement confirms Radek's, their statements mutually corroborate, or strengthen each other.

Iagoda's Confessions

There exists a good deal more such "second-hand evidence" of Trotsky's collaboration with the Germans and Japanese in recently published Soviet archival documents.

Genrikh S. Iagoda was Commissar of the NKVD (= Minister of Internal Affairs), which included the political police, from 1934 till he was dismissed in September 1936. He was arrested in early March 1937. Subsequently he was one of the leading defendants in the third Moscow trial of March 1938.

In 1997 a number of materials from Genrikh Iagoda's investigative file were published in a very small edition of 200 copies in the provincial city of Kazan' by some researchers employed by the FSB, successor to the KGB. Since that time some of the documents published in this collection have been published elsewhere, evidently from copies held in different archives. In these interrogation transcripts Iagoda makes startling confessions. These confessions include details of his collaboration with German intelligence.[32]

Avel' Enukidze was a high-ranking Party official and member of the Soviet government who had been arrested earlier. Only two interrogations of Enukidze's have been published: one in the 1997 collection of Iagoda materials, another in the second of the "Lubianka-Stalin" volumes in 2004. In neither does Enukidze speak much about Trotsky. In the volume of materials devoted to Iagoda, however, we find the following remark about Enukidze, Trotsky, and the Germans. We have bolded passages of special interest to our investigation.

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[32] *Genrikh Iagoda. Narkom vnutrennikh del SSSR, General'niy komisar gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti. Sbornik dokumentov.* Kazan', 1997. (Genrikh Iagoda)

In the first place, in 1935 the prospects of a war by a strengthened Germany against the Soviet Union were growing with each day. In that connection it was necessary to move ahead swiftly and make an agreement with them.

Enukidze told me that Trotsky abroad had established full contact with German governmental circles, and that Enukidze himself also had a line of contact with the Germans. (Genrikh Iagoda, 193)

Iagoda also testified about Lev Karakhan's ties to Trotsky and the Germans.

But I am aware that **in the orientation to and conspiracies with German governmental circles both the Trotskyists and Zinovievists, on the one side, and the Rights, on the other side, had their own separate lines [of contact].**

Question: How did they differ and where do you know this from?

Answer: Karakhan spoke to me about this in one of our talks with him in 1935.

The essence of these two lines in orientation to and contact with the Germans consists in the following: **the Trotskyist-Zinovievist part of our center was carrying out negotiations with German governmental circles through Trotsky,** who was in emigration, isolated from the Soviet Union, ignorant of the internal processes of the country and ready to give away everything just in order to overthrow Soviet power and return to Russia as soon as possible.

We, the Rights, had a different attitude. **We were not supporters of a new partition of Russia, as Trotsky was doing . . . .**

> Karakhan's connection with the Germans had existed for a long time. And the center of the Rights used this line of contact, already established, as a real line, and offered to Karakhan to enter into official negotiations with the German governmental circles. I have already confessed that Karakhan was in Berlin after this and met there with Nadolny and Hess (or Goebbels) and, as he said to me, had already in 1936 achieved significant concessions from the Germans.
>
> Question: What concessions?
>
> Answer: **Concessions of the servile conditions on the basis of which the agreement with Trotsky had been achieved.** (Genrikh Iagoda, 194-195)

Karakhan apparently claimed to have had his own ties to the Germans through Nadolny (presumably Rudolf Nadolny, German diplomat)[33] and either Hess or Goebbels. Others of the Rights testified at the March 1938 Trial that Karakhan and Iagoda were very critical of Trotsky's dealings with the Germans, believing that Trotsky was cut off from the realities of life in the USSR and was yielding far too much to the Germans just in hopes of returning to power.

Assessing the Evidence: Iagoda's Confessions

Scholars with "impeccable" anticommunist credentials have cited these documents unproblematically. For example, Marc Jansen and Nikita Petrov cite this work as a primary source, without claiming that the interrogations in it were, or even might have been, faked, obtained by compulsion, etc.34 One of the documents has also been published in a semiofficial collection of documents from the

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[33] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Nadolny The German Wikipedia page article is much fuller.

[34] E.g. Jansen & Petrov 220 n.23, 224 n. 110, 226 n. 9, 228 n.40. Petrov is a senior researcher with the highly anticommunist organization "Memorial"; Jansen is a major anticommunist researcher of the Soviet 1930s.

Soviet archives, a fact that further attests to their genuine nature.35 We may therefore conclude that the documents really do come from the Iagoda investigative file and are generally conceded to be genuine.

These documents merit a detailed analysis in and of themselves. Their contents intersect with and confirm many other materials now available such as confession statements by other individuals arrested in connection with the investigations concerning espionage and conspiracy, and the transcript of the Third Moscow trial.

At the end of each of Iagoda's confessions printed in this 1997 volume is a disclaimer, variously worded. At the end of interrogation two, Iagoda's first confession, which took place on April 26, 1937, pp. 109-137, we read:

> Information about the conspirator-employees of the NKVD is falsified. Other aforementioned statements by Iagoda are not credible.
>
> For more information about the repression of Chekists in the middle 1930s see Palchinsky A.A. "Represii v organakh NKVD v seredine 30-kh godov," in *Political persecution in Russia: Historical and contemporary.* St.Petersburg: 1997, pp. 284-294.

At the end of the second confession of May 4, 1937, (pp. 137-143):

> Information about the conspirator-employees of the NKVD is falsified.

At the end of the third (May 13, 1937, pp. 144-167):

> All information in the transcript concerning acts of terror and conspiracies are falsified.

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35 The documents published as Nos. 40 and 41 in *Genrikh Iagoda*, 108-136, were also published as document No. 59, pp. 135-145 in the official collection *Lubianka. Stalin i glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti NKVD 1937-1938* (Moscow: "Materik," 2004).

V.M. Primakov and the other military men were fully rehabilitated in 1937. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* No. 4 (1989), 42-73. A.I. Rykov, N.I. Bukharin and others were rehabilitated in 1988. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* No. 5 (1989), 69-92.

B.I. Nicolaevsky (1887-1966), in 1903-1906 a Bolshevik, then a Menshevik, political émigré. Nicolaevsky refuted the reports that he received any packets from Rykov. *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* No. 5 (1938), 12. For more detail on P.P. Ol'berg and Shemelev see V.Z. Rogovin, *1937*. Moscow, 1996.

At the end of the fourth (May 19, 1937, pp. 167-184):

> All information about conspiracies and acts of terror is falsified. The case of the murder of S.M. Kirov remains open to this day. A.E. Enukidze and the other persons named in the transcript were rehabilitated in the 1960s-1980s.

The fifth (May 26, 1937, pp. 185-199):

> All information in the transcript concerning conspiracy and accusations of "espionage" is falsified. L.M. Karakhan and the other persons named in the transcript have been rehabilitated.

At the end of a two-page statement by Iagoda to Ezhov concerning NKVD worker Mironov (June 4, 1937, pp. 200-202):

> The information in the document is not credible.

At the end of the interrogation of December 28, 1937 (pp. 202-218):

> The information is not credible. Professor L.G. Levin and other doctors were later rehabilitated because there is no evidence of any crime in their activities.

The end of the "face-to-face confrontation" (*ochnaia stavka*) between Iagoda and Dr. Levin of January 4, 1938, pp. 218-223:

> The information cited in the transcript is not credible.

The end of the confrontation between Iagoda and Dr. Kriuchkov of January 5, 1938, pp. 223-227:

> The answers are not credible. P.P. Kriuchkov was later rehabilitated because there is no evidence of any crime in his activities.

The end of the confrontation between Iagoda and Professor D.D. Pletnev of January 5, 1938, pp. 227-230:

> The answers are not credible. Professor D.D. Pletnev was later rehabilitated because there is no evidence of any crime in his activities.

The end of the confrontation between Dr. Levin, also of January 5, 1938, pp. 231-233:

> The "confessions" of L.G. Levin and P.P. Kriuchkov were later refuted as not credible.

At the end of the interrogation of Iagoda held on January 10, 1938, pp. 235-239:

> Iagoda's answers are not credible.

There are similar remarks at the end of the interrogation – confession of Artuzov of June 15, 1937 (pp. 487-499). We will consider Artuzov's confession below.

> The information given by Artuzov is not credible. Later it was all refuted in his rehabilitation.

The same kind of comments are made at the end of other interrogation – confessions which we do not consider here, such as those of Avel' Enukidze and of NKVD men Bulanov, Prokof'ev, Radzivilovskii, and Trilisser.

Assessing These Documents: "Rehabilitations"

The comments cited above are of course not a critical analysis, or indeed *any* kind of analysis, of the confessions of Iagoda's that the volume reproduces. In fact, the book has no analysis of the assertions made in the interrogation-confessions at all.

Some of the comments allude to "rehabilitations." Most such "rehabilitations" have not been made public, so we can't evaluate them. However, we know a good deal about a number of "rehabilitations" of well-known figures – enough to know that they are political, not historically accurate, documents.

Specifically, we have a good deal of the material on Bukharin's "rehabilitation." We know that it does not prove him innocent in the slightest. On the contrary, in their decree "rehabilitating" Bukharin the Plenum of the Soviet Supreme Court falsified a key document – Frinovskii's confession of April 11, 1939, which was not public in February 1988 when Bukharin's case came before it, but has been published since. Far from proving Bukharin innocent, Frinovskii's confession in fact shows him to have been guilty. Earlier in the present volume we pointed out that the "rehabilitation" document of Zinoviev and his codefendants contains evidence of Zinoviev's guilt rather than his innocence.

So "rehabilitations" are not proof that the individuals "rehabilitated" were innocent, even though they are presented as though they were. Rather, they are official claims that the individuals "rehabilitated" will be *considered to be innocent*, and in future will be declared to have been "victims" of "Stalin's crimes."

"Rehabilitations" are *political* acts, not exercises in the reconsideration of evidence. Marc Junge, a German researcher on the repressions of the 1930s and a determined proponent of the "anti-Stalin" paradigm, put it this way:

> In Übereinstimmung zu von Goudoever kann
> abschließend festgestellt wurden, daß Rehabilitierung
> in der Sowjetunion ein politisch-administrativer

> Willkürakt blieb, der vor allem von der politischen Zweckmäßigkeit der Maßnahmen bestimmt wurde, nicht aber von der strafrechtlichen Korrektheit.[36]
>
> In agreement with von Goudoever it may be definitively established that rehabilitation in the Soviet Union remained an act of political-administrative caprice that was determined above all by political usefulness, not by juridical correctness.

It appears that the "disclaimers" quoted above and attached to the end of every confession-statement in this volume are the same kind of thing. They indirectly inform the reader something like this: "We, the editors of this volume, claim that the contents of these confession-statements are not true. We *assert* that they are 'not trustworthy' or 'falsified' but we cannot *prove* it and, in fact, have no evidence to that effect. If you want evidence, refer to the 'rehabilitations' of the individuals in question – to which, in fact, you cannot gain access."

The editors of the Iagoda volume are employees of the FSB, the successor to the KGB – that is, the Russian intelligence and security service. *Not* to state that these confessions are "false" or at least "not trustworthy" would be for them to take a position contradictory to what some important Russian (and Soviet) state institutions have taken in the past. It's not the job of the state security service to call some other state institution a liar. Whatever else it may mean this formula allows them to avoid doing so.

We can deduce something more from these brief phrases. *We may assume that if there were any other kind of evidence that the statements made in the confessions and interrogations were false, that evidence would be cited.* Since no such evidence is cited, in effect these notes constitute a kind of admission that the contents of the confessions can*not* be shown to be false.

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[36] *Bucharins Rehabilitierung. Historisches Gedächtnis in der Sowjetunion 1953-1991.* Berlin: BasisDruck Vlg, 1999, 266. This is discussed in more detail in Furr and Bobrov, 5 ff.

One could object that here too "lack of evidence is not evidence of the lack" of contradictory evidence, but this would be to ignore the fact that when concerted efforts to find evidence, made by those highly motivated to find such evidence, turns out to be unsuccessful, there is important information content in this failure. It is one thing if those motivated *not* to find such evidence fail to find any, but quite different when highly motivated searchers fail. In reality, we know from the published volumes of rehabilitation documents that during Gorbachev's time very thorough searches of the archives were carried out with a view to finding evidence that the condemned Opposition defendants of the 1930s were falsely convicted. In the case of Iagoda, the Moscow Trials defendants, and the "Tukhachevsky Affair" we can conclude with relative confidence that no such evidence was found.

Even some Cold-War scholars who reject the validity of the Moscow Trials on principle accept these Iagoda documents at face value and have cited them as genuine without negative comment on the veracity of their contents. Evidence is not to be simply "believed" or "disbelieved" – much less rejected or disregarded – but rather must be considered in the context of all the other evidence. Even to say that Iagoda's confession *may* be false is also to say that it *may not* be false. That is, absent any information that they were false, there is no more basis for "disbelieving" than for "believing" them. In fact, not even the anticommunist scholars have rejected them as invalid.

If Iagoda's confessions were the only evidence we had of oppositionists conspiring with Germany or Japan, we would still have no grounds to discard them. On the contrary: testimony that such an illegal contact existed, while not conclusive, is far more compelling than any claims to the contrary. This is a principle of investigation so self-evident it is seldom discussed. In the case of a person accused of a crime one may expect denial in any case: by an innocent person, because he is innocent; by a guilty person because he wishes to escape the consequences of his crime. Therefore confessions of guilt are of greater interest than professions of innocence – unless there is evidence that such confessions were extracted by

force, and no such evidence, in the present case, has been produced.

But Iagoda's confessions are far from the only evidence we have that the opposition was conspiring with Germany and/or Japan. They constitute just one group of documents within a large body of evidence that suggests such conspiracy. As with any confession of guilt, the existence of this testimony is *prima facie* evidence that the confessions are true.

They are confirmed by Iagoda's appeal for clemency published in *Izvestiia* in 1992, which reads as follows:

> My guilt before my country is great. It is impossible to redeem it to any extent. It is hard to die. Before the whole people and Party I stand on my knees and beg you to have mercy on me and let me live.[37]

Every one of the ten persons whose confessions were reproduced along with Iagoda's insisted upon his own guilt in his appeal. Bukharin wrote that his guilt was so great he "should be shot ten times over." As we have already noted Dr. Natan Lur'e repeated his guilt:

> I really did prepare the assassination of Voroshilov upon instruction from Franz Weitz, a Gestapo representative. I wished to accomplish these disgusting murders because I had been poisoned by the poison of Trotskyism during my long stay in Germany.

The appeals of many other Moscow Trials defendants have now been published including those of all but one (Rakovsky) the defendants at the Third Moscow Trial of March 1938. All the defendants, without exception, reaffirm their guilt. We have examined them in Chapter Nine of *Trotsky's 'Amalgams.'*

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[37] "Rasskaz o desiati rasstreliannykh".

No single piece of evidence is univocal, pointing towards a single conclusion only. One might perhaps *imagine* an example of an innocent person who nevertheless was persuaded to confess again and again in pretrial interrogations; to do so again at trial; to protest his innocence of certain capital crimes in vehement terms while at the same time confirming his guilt of other capital crimes; and then confessing his guilt again in his appeal. But we have to draw our historical conclusions not on imagination but evidence. There is no evidence to refute Iagoda's confessions, while they confirm and are consistent with a great deal of evidence we do have.

Chapter 4. Rakovsky, Trotsky, and the Japanese

In January 1937 the second Moscow Trial, the "Radek-Piatakov Trial," was under way. In an essay dated January 25, 1937, and titled simply "Rakovsky" Trotsky wrote the following:

> In the present trial, the defendant Drobnis is playing the part of chief agent for the GPU in laying the basis for new indictments. Among others, Drobnis named Rakovsky as an accomplice in the alleged terrorist conspiracy. Rakovsky's fate is profoundly tragic. He and I were bound by ties of friendship for more than thirty years. Of all the defendants in both trials he stood the closest to me. After being sent to Siberian exile in 1928, Rakovsky held out longer and more firmly than all the others in spite of illness and age (he is now sixty). He even made an attempt to escape, was captured and wounded; in the end, he capitulated – in 1934, six years later than the rest.
>
> At the trial of the sixteen it was "established" that I first issued instructions for terrorism in 1932. But it was altogether impossible to understand why I would have issued such instructions to capitulators, who had been waging war against me, rather than to Rakovsky, who at that time remained true to the banner of the Opposition. The very fact that Rakovsky was not named as a member of either the main center, or the "parallel" center, or the "reserve" center was in itself the most convincing proof to thoughtful people that none of these centers ever existed. The GPU has now decided to correct its original error. Drobnis has named Rakovsky. The old fighter, broken by life, goes inescapably to meet his fate. (WLT 1936-37 142)

One month later, on February 27, 1937, Trotsky returned to Rakovsky:

> A few months after his capitulation, Rakovsky was sent to Japan as a representative of the USSR to the international conference of the Red Cross (which took place at the beginning of 1935, I believe, although it is very easy to find the exact date from the newspapers of the period). It is clear that while Rakovsky was sent to Japan, members of his family were held in Moscow as hostages. Nevertheless, sending Rakovsky abroad so soon after his capitulation produced some surprise at the time. The "friends" of the USSR in England – inspired, of course, by the GPU – used Rakovsky's trip to prove the sincerity of his repentance. Now we can hypothesize with some certainty that the only reason Rakovsky was sent abroad was to better catch him in the toils of the amalgam in preparation. **It is quite certain that in the next trial, with Rakovsky participating as the accused, there will be charges of conspiratorial dealings between Rakovsky and the Japanese diplomats and military (under orders from Trotsky, of course)**. (ibid. 213)

Seven weeks after that, during the "Dewey Commission" hearings on April 15, 1937, Trotsky again returned to the subject of Rakovsky's arrest:

> I can say now what it is about. It is the preparation for a new trial. I don't know the concrete circumstances. I know only that Bukharin was sent abroad in 1936, the beginning of 1936, for the factories. He was their agent. He was in Prague, a tourist. Now, I ask myself if it was not with the purpose of preparing with him a new combination. He gave a lecture in Prague, totally in the official spirit. But it is possible they sent him in order to have the possibility to affirm that abroad he entered into communications with Trotskyites and German agents. I don't know, but it is quite possible.

> The same with Rakovsky. Immediately, he was sent to Japan. I was a bit astonished. What was the meaning of it? It was at the end of 1934, and the British friends of the Soviet Union – the friends of the Soviet Union are everywhere – they are directed by the agents of the GPU, without their knowing; the genuine direction is everywhere in the hands of the GPU. The friends in London declared: "You see, the repentance of Rakovsky is totally sincere. The Government sent him abroad." But his family remained in Moscow, the family of Rakovsky. At that time I was of the opinion that he was sent for demonstrative purposes in order to show the whole world that he was free, his repentance was sincere. **Now, I ask myself if it did not have a second purpose, to frame him afterwards – that he was connected with the Japanese military chiefs in the Government, and so forth.** (CLT 338-9, 9th session, April 15, 1937)

We can see now that Trotsky was lying in the first passage. In 1980 Trotskyist researcher Pierre Broué discovered that Trotsky was indeed in a bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev. Trotsky disguised this fact behind vociferous claims that he despised them for their "capitulation" or abandonment of opposition to Stalin and had had nothing to do with them since his exile. The "centers," or leadership collectives for the bloc, existed as well.

Trotsky had made even stronger claims about Radek, a defendant in the second Moscow Trial. Trotsky claimed that he had not and would not have anything to do with Radek because the latter was a "capitulator." He and Radek had even exchanged insults – Radek in articles published in Soviet newspapers in which he attacked Trotsky, and Trotsky in his own articles. Yet we now know that Trotsky was indeed in contact with Radek. Once again, the proclamations of disdain and claims that he had had no contact with the "capitulator" were a smokescreen behind which their collaboration had continued.

In the second quotation written a month later Trotsky made a "prediction":

> It is quite certain that in the next trial, with Rakovsky participating as the accused, there will be charges of conspiratorial dealings between Rakovsky and the Japanese diplomats and military (under orders from Trotsky, of course).

Rakovsky was one of the defendants in the third Moscow trial of March 2-15, 1938. As we shall see, Rakovsky did indeed claim exactly what Trotsky "predicted" – that he had been approached by "Japanese military chiefs in the government" "under orders from Trotsky," transmitted indirectly through the Soviet ambassador to Japan Konstantin Konstantinovich IUrenev [1], who Rakovsky claimed had been a Trotskyist since the 1920s.

Whose "Amalgam"?

In his essays about the Kirov murder Trotsky "predicted" that his name would soon appear in Soviet accounts of the investigation, and explained this prediction as follows:

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[1] IUrenev, K.K. Ambassador to Japan January 29, 1933, to June 16, 1937; to Germany June 16, 1937 to October 11, 1937. Arrested September 23, 1937. Executed August 1, 1938. "Rehabilitated" December 22, 1956. Biographical information on IUrenev can be found at https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Юренев,_Константин_Константинович http://www.hrono.ru/biograf/bio_yu/jurenev_kk.php , http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/martirolog/?t=page&id=15808

IUrenev was arrested the day after his "face-to-face confrontation" with Rakovsky, who had named him in one of his confession statements. It appears that the NKVD did not know about IUrenev's involvement prior to Rakovsky's naming him. This fact troubles Georgii Cherniavskii, coauthor of the recent (2014) biography of Rakovsky. We shall discuss this work below.

In contrast to Rakovsky, who got a prison sentence, IUrenev was sentenced to death and executed. This difference in treatment may well reflect that fact that Rakovsky confessed to things, and named people, about which the NKVD did not previously know. We discuss these issues later in the present essay.

> There is only one way to forestall en route the amalgams that are in preparation: *Expose the scheme in advance.* (Emphasis in original.)[2]

Trotsky knew his name would soon appear because he and his Russian followers were in a political bloc with Zinoviev, Kamenev, and their followers. Therefore it was predictable that the Leningrad Zinovievites, arrested in December 1934 for the murder of Sergei Kirov, would name Trotsky, since they had already named their own leaders. So Trotsky's tactic was indeed to "expose the scheme in advance" – except that the "scheme" in question was not Stalin's but his own.

Trotsky claimed that he was being "framed" for complicity in the Kirov murder. In reality he was not being "framed." The Trotskyists, who were in a political bloc with the Zinovievites and Rightists, were thereby at least accessories to Kirov's murder whether or not they knew in advance that their partners in the bloc, the Zinovievites, were planning the assassination. By anticipating the charge against him Trotsky hoped to convince his readers that the charges were obvious lies – so obvious that they were "predictable."[3]

We have some evidence that Trotsky, through his supporters in the bloc, approved of the plan to murder Kirov. According to Genrikh Iagoda, Avel' Enukidze told him that the Rights (of which he and Iagoda were members) reluctantly "sanctioned" the murder of Kirov by the Zinovievists at the insistence of "the Trotskyist-Zinovievist part of the center [of the conspiracy]." If that is so, then Trotsky knew about the plan for the murder. (Genrikh Iagoda 180; 193)

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[2] The Russian edition, which must be the original, reads: "разоблачить замысел заранее." See *Biulleten' Oppozitsii* No. 41, Section 12, at http://web.mit.edu/fjk/www/FI/BO/BO-41.shtml

[3] See the sections "Expose the scheme in advance" in Chapters 13, 14, and 15 of *Trotsky's "Amalgams."*

However, none of the defendants in the Kirov assassination trial or in the first Moscow trial of August 1936, the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial, claimed that the Trotskyists either had prior knowledge of or played any role in the murder. If these defendants' testimony was genuine, and if Trotskyists really had prior knowledge or played a role, the defendants would have had no reason to conceal this fact. If their testimony had been "fabricated" by the prosecution, there was no reason for the NKVD, Vyshinsky, or for that matter Stalin, to refrain from putting into the mouths of the 1936 trial defendants a story that Trotsky and/or his followers were at least accessories, if not outright accomplices, to Kirov's murder. But no such accusations occurred. That leaves this particular issue in doubt.

False capitulations – false declarations of loyalty to the Party in the future – were common among members of the Soviet opposition. In 1990 leading Trotskyist scholar Pierre Broué asserted that "everybody" knew this.

> 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 Andres 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.[4]

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[4] Broué, Pierre. "Party Opposition to Stalin (1930-1932) and the First Moscow Trial." In John W. Strong, ed. *Essays on Revolutionary Culture and Stalinism*. Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1990, pp. 98-111, at p. 104. Broué had a lapse of memory here. In a later and more detailed article Broué says that Nin's article was published in "l'organe de l'Opposition de gauche allemande, *Der Kommunist*, du début novembre 1930." (Broué, "Ivan Nikitich Smirnov. Une conscience communiste (1881-1936)." *CahLT 60* (1997) 44.

Therefore the fact that Rakovsky had openly "capitulated" is no reason to believe that this "capitulation" was genuine. Rakovsky was probably telling the truth when he testified that he had remained a loyal Trotskyist all along, that his "capitulation" was dishonest.

> ... in February 1934, I sent a telegram to the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., saying that I had completely disarmed myself both ideologically and organizationally and asked to be reinstated in the Party. This telegram was insincere, I was lying.[5]

We can be reasonably confident that this part of Rakovsky's testimony at the third Moscow trial was truthful: that he had lied when he claimed that he had capitulated and that he had "completely disarmed" himself. But we would like to know more.

Were Rakovsky's dramatic confessions of having been a Japanese spy on Trotsky's behalf true or not? Whose false story or "amalgam" is in play here? Did "Stalin" – really the Soviet prosecution – invent the story of Rakovsky's connivance with the Japanese, including Trotsky's own conspiring with them, and then force Rakovsky to mouth lies? Or was it Trotsky who was lying when he claimed that this story was an "amalgam," another of "Stalin's" fabrications? The evidentiary issues that face us when we address this question are the subject of the present chapter.

Moscow Trial Testimony

In anticommunist and Trotskyist writing Moscow Trial testimony is routinely dismissed out of hand as worthless for evidentiary purposes. When a reason is given, it is normally that the testimony

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[5] *Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" Heard Before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R.* Moscow, March 2-13, 1938. Verbatim Report. Moscow: People's Commissariat of Justice of the U.S.S.R., 1938. (1938 Trial), 288.

either was, or might have been, invented by the prosecution and the defendants were forced to repeat it.

The claim that the testimony "might have been" fabricated and therefore untruthful is an interesting one. It logically leaves open the possibility that it "might not" have been fabricated. And that suggests that the testimony ought to be evaluated in some way to determine whether it had been fabricated or not. However, in practice this is not done. The testimony is disregarded on the naïve basis that if it "might" be fabricated then it is useless as historical evidence.

This reasoning is invalid. All testimony given by persons under arrest, or even by persons detained by police, anywhere, is in some sense given "under threat" or "under compulsion," since normally the persons giving this testimony would not be giving it if they had not been under police detention, which is itself a threat – of further detention or worse. Even testimony that is apparently voluntarily and freely given – say, by a person whom the police were not seeking and who had no reason to think the police might seek him or her in future – might have been fabricated by the witness him/herself for some reason, or simply misremembered.

Even the probability that evidence will be far from reliable does not normally disqualify its use in court. For example, many studies have confirmed that eyewitness testimony is notoriously unreliable under any circumstances, even when offered completely voluntarily. But no court would simply disregard it.

Testimony given by persons under arrest, by persons detained by police, and by persons not detained but merely questioned by police, by persons who volunteer their testimony (for example, by walking into a police station and offering to make a statement), eyewitness testimony – all these forms of testimony are normally subjected to various tests in an attempt to assess their validity.

This means that it is incorrect to simply reject the testimony, either pre-trial or at trial, of defendants in the Moscow trials. Rather, we need to subject this testimony to verification or invalidation.

The most obvious method is that of independent verification. We can study the testimony carefully to see whether we have independent evidence, either from within the USSR or from beyond its borders that can corroborate or disprove it.

I have not found any scholarship that undertakes independent verification - proof or disproof - of Moscow trial testimony. This fact can't be explained by any lack of independent corroborating evidence -- there is a lot of it. In previous essays, and in other chapters in this book, we have cited a good deal of such evidence. Examples include the following:

* For decades Trotsky, Khrushchev-era, Gorbachev-era, Western academic scholarship, and Trotskyist writers, dismissed the allegation made at the Moscow trials that a "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" existed. The bloc was declared to be part of a "Stalinist" frame-up. But in 1980 evidence found by Trotskyist scholar Pierre Broué in the Trotsky archive at Harvard proved that this bloc did indeed exist and that it had been formed in 1932, the same year that testimony at several of the Moscow trials claimed.

* A number of the statements made in their testimony by Moscow trial defendants about Trotsky and which Trotsky vehemently denied can also now be verified. For example, in another chapter of this book we discuss how we can now verify Karl Radek's claim that he received a letter from Trotsky in late February or early March of 1932 by means of evidence from the Harvard Trotsky archive.

* NKVD General Genrikh Samoilovich Liushkov, who defected to the Japanese in July 1938, privately told his Japanese military handlers that Aleksei Rykov, one of the chief defendants at the recent (March 1938) Moscow trial, really had been conspiring with military men against the Soviet regime.

* Liushkov also privately told the Japanese about military conspiracies that really existed, and named a number of Party leaders who had been implicated in these conspiracies. Some of these

Party figure and military men had been named by Moscow trials defendants.[6]

* In February 1937 an official of the German Foreign Ministry told a Czech diplomat that Hitler was expecting a military seizure of power in the USSR which would result in a military dictatorship favorable to relations with Germany. This confirms testimony at the 1938 Moscow trial testimony, as well as the testimony by accused Soviet generals which they made under arrest in May and June 1937 and at their closed trial of June 11, 1937, that they had been secretly in league with the German military.

* Jules Humbert-Droz, a close associate of Bukharin's, revealed in memoirs published in Switzerland in 1971 that in 1928 Bukharin had told him that he and his supporters were planning to assassinate Stalin.[7]

We can also check some assertions made at the Moscow trials against information from within the Soviet Union in cases where it is highly unlikely that the confirmation is the result of fabrication. Examples include the following:

* Testimony by defendants before and at the trial of the eight military commanders accused of co-conspiracy with some of the defendants at the Moscow trials and of collaboration with Germany confirms Trotsky's collaboration with Germany as well. This testimony was made to a secret court and it remains secret in Russia today. We know about it only because it was sent out of Russia be-

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[6] See Grover Furr, *The Murder of Sergei Kirov. History, Scholarship and the Anti-Stalin Paradigm*. Kettering, OH: Erythrós Press and Media, LLC, 2013, Chapter 17.

[7] See the discussion of and excerpt from Humbert-Droz's memoir in Grover Furr and Vladimir L. Bobrov. "Stephen Cohen's Biography of Bukharin: A Study in the Falsehood of Khrushchev-Era 'Revelations'." *Cultural Logic* 2010. At http://clogic.eserver.org/2010/Furr.pdf

fore his death by General Dmitrii Volkogonov, who had *carte blanche* access to secret Soviet archives.[8]

There is no evidence of any scenario according to which even this top-secret testimony was fabricated so as to confirm accusations at the Moscow trials. Moreover, the guilt of these military commanders is confirmed in a general way by Liushkov's private statements to his Japanese handlers, where the Soviet NKVD general asserted that real conspiracies among Soviet military leaders did exist.

* Grigory Zinoviev, under arrest and interrogation in July 1936, admitted continuing opposition to the Stalin regime but refused to admit to any criminal activity until finally confronted by one of his supporters in a confession that remains secret to this day but which American scholar J. Arch Getty was permitted to read.

> Three days later [July 26, 1936] Zinoviev was confronted by one of his followers, [N.A.] 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)

The confession mentioned by Getty came just two days before Zinoviev's confession of July 28, 1936, still secret in Russia but available in the Volkogonov Papers. We have obtained a copy of this confession.[9]

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[8] See Furr and Bobrov, "Marshal S.M. Budiennyi on the Tukhachevsky Trial. Impressions of an Eye-Witness." (in Russian). *Klio* (St Petersburg) No. 2 (2012), pp. 8-24. At https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/budennyi_klio12.pdf

[9] See Furr, *The Murder of Sergei Kirov*, 228-235.

* Zinoviev used the phrase "I am no longer an enemy" in a letter he sent before trial from prison, asking for leniency, and again in his appeal of his death sentence.[10]

* A number of high-profile defendants such as Nikolai Bukharin and Genrikh Iagoda vigorously rejected some of the charges made against them by Soviet prosecutor Vyshinskii at trial. Most of Bukharin's testimony is devoted to rejecting accusations against him. At the same time Bukharin admitted to other serious crimes without any attempt to deny them.[11]

Iagoda refused repeatedly to admit to being an accomplice to the murder of Sergei Kirov while admitting to being what in Anglo-American jurisprudence is called an accessory to it. Iagoda insisted that he knew something was going to happen and took no steps to stop it, but was not informed in advance exactly what kind of attempt would be made to murder Kirov, when, or by whom. When the eventual assassin, Leonid Nikolaev, was detained near Kirov's home with a pistol and notes indicating he was shadowing Kirov, Iagoda's men followed his instructions and released Nikolaev. When informed of this Iagoda approved.[12]

This kind of vigorous, prolonged, emphatic rejection of one of the Prosecutor's central charges is inconsistent with any hypothesis that Bukharin and Iagoda confessed out of fear of torture, to spare their families, or because they had been promised leniency for a false confession.

* We now have appeals of death sentences from many of the defendants at all three Moscow trials. In every one of them the de-

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[10] See "O Tak Nazyvaemom 'Antisovetskom Ob"edinennom Trotskistsko-Zinov'evskom Tsentre". *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* 8 (1989), p. 89 col. 2 (same text in RKEB 184); "Rasskaz o desiati rasstreliannykh" ("A Story of Ten Who Were Shot"), *Izvestiia* September 2, 1992, p. 3 col. 1.

[11] For a detailed discussion of this point see Furr and Bobrov, "Stephen Cohen's Biography of Bukharin."

[12] See the full discussion of this point in Furr, *Murder of Sergei Kirov*, Chapter 15.

fendants insist that they are guilty. Some of these appeals were published under Gorbachev, who was in the middle of an intense campaign to blame Stalin and the Stalin-era Soviet leadership of frame-ups in all the trials. Many others were published in 2013 under the auspices of the intensely anti-Stalin "Memorial Society." If any of the defendants had appealed for clemency on grounds other than guilt and repentance – for example, on grounds that they had pled guilty in return for some promise or other (not to be executed, to spare their families, etc.) – Gorbachev and the "Memorial Society" would certainly have published them.[13]

* On June 20, 1937, Stalin was handed a telegram that Trotsky had sent from Mexico to the Executive Committee of the Supreme Soviet concerning his willingness to return to the USSR under certain circumstances. On it Stalin wrote that Trotsky was a "spy of Hitler" and handed the telegram on to two of his associates, who concurred. This is evidence that Stalin believed Trotsky was guilty of conspiring with Germany. It is not compatible with a theory that Stalin, through the NKVD, had compelled any of those who, like the military commanders, had testified to this, to testify falsely. We have examined this document in an earlier chapter.

* A confession date April 11, 1939, by Mikhail Frinovskii, former assistant commissar of the NKVD under Nikolai Ezhov, has been quoted as genuine many times by Soviet and Russian officials. When the full text of Frinovskii's confession was published in 2006 it turned out that sections of the confession that had always previously been omitted confirm the guilt of a number of the major defendants at the Moscow trials. Later in the present chapter we will return to Frinovskii's confession and its implications.[14]

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[13] See the sources cited in n. 11 above.

[14] Frinovskii's confession statement is available in English translation at https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/Frinovskiieng.html; in the original Russian at https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/Frinovskiiru.html (choose Character Encoding Cyrillic – Windows)

It would appear virtually impossible that all this mutually corroboratory circumstantial evidence and more like it was carefully scripted and coordinated by "Stalin" – really the NKVD and prosecution – in advance, and all the defendants, while innocent of any crimes, were forced to rehearse it until their "performances" were virtually seamless and convincing and that this massively coordinated forgery left no traces. A far more likely hypothesis, albeit one that sharply contradictions the mainstream anti-Stalin paradigm, is that the defendants really were guilty of at least those crimes to which they pleaded guilty though not necessarily to everything the prosecution accused them of.

In light of all this confirmation of statements made by Moscow trials defendants, the only hypothesis concerning the statements of both the defendants and the prosecution at the Moscow trials that is supported by evidence is that these statement are genuine—meaning that they originated from the persons who made them and from the events they described. At the same time, the prosecution's charges too are statements the prosecution believed to be truthful.

The confessions and other assertions made by the defendants either are statements that they believed were truthful or are falsehoods that the defendants chose to make, but are not fabrications by the prosecution. We do know that the defendants sometimes chose to make statements that were false in order to mislead the prosecution and the state.

Here are some examples:

* At the January 1937 trial Karl Radek claimed that he knew Marshal Tukhachevsky to be completely loyal to the USSR. This was not true, and Nikolai Bukharin, who collaborated with Radek, knew that it was not true. Radek probably also knew about Tukhachevsky's participation in the Right-Trotskyist conspiracy but

concealed it, no doubt in the hope that the military conspiracy would be successful.[15]

* At the August 1936 Moscow trial Zinoviev and Kamenev failed to identify Genrikh Iagoda, chief (People's Commissar) of the NKVD, as a member of the network of conspiracies. In 1937, in pretrial testimony that was never intended to be made public, Iagoda confessed that he had told Zinoviev and Kamenev that they would not be executed and then made certain that they were indeed executed so as to prevent them from "saying too much" – admitting his own participation in the conspiracy.[16]

* Likewise, Frinovskii's statement makes it clear that Zinoviev and Kamenev knew at least about Iagoda's involvement in the Zinovievite-Right-Trotskyist conspiracy and did not reveal this during the trial.[17]

* The statement of Mikhail Frinovskii reveals that Ezhov had induced Genrikh Iagoda to confess to attempting to poison Ezhov with mercury but that this confession was false. The fiction that he himself had been one of the targets of the network of conspiracies was useful to Ezhov in disguising the fact that he himself was a party to these conspiracies. Iagoda agreed to make this false confession in hopes that Ezhov would prevent his execution.[18]

* Nikolai Bukharin repeatedly said that he had confessed to everything. Yet we know that he did not. He never confessed that he had been plotting to murder Stalin as early as 1928. We know this is true thanks to Humbert-Droz's memoirs.

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[15] See *Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre. Heard Before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, January 23-30, 1937....Verbatim Report.* Moscow: People's Commissariat of Justice of the U.S.S.R., 1937. (1937 Trial), p. 146. This passage is not present in the shorter Russian language transcript.

[16] Genrikh Iagoda, 198-199.

[17] Frinovskii, 40.

[18] Frinovskii, 48.

* Bukharin and other defendants at the March 1938 trial never revealed that Nikolai Ezhov, then chief (People's Commissar) of the NKVD, was also a part of the opposition conspiracy. Mikhail Frinovskii revealed this in his confession statement of April 11, 1939.[19] We will discuss this statement in more detail below. Ezhov too made extensive confessions about his conspiracy, some of which have been published.[20]

Thus there is a great deal of corroborative evidence both from within the USSR and from beyond Soviet influence that confirms the essential *reliability as evidence* of the defendants' confessions at the Moscow trials. We refer the interested reader to Part One of the first volume of this study, *Trotsky's 'Amalgams,'* which is an exhaustive verification of many of the accusations to which Moscow Trials defendants confessed.

Therefore it is more reasonable to proceed on the assumption that even confession statements that we cannot at present verify independently *represent what the defendants chose to say rather than lies concocted by the prosecution* – even if we hold such statements aside for future confirmation.

Another Method of Verification

We have reviewed the results of verifying the statements of Moscow trials defendants by checking them against independent evidence from both outside and within the USSR. This is the more obvious and traditional method of verifying evidence and the most reliable one.

With the release of much documentation from former Soviet archives we now have another way to check the Moscow trials tes-

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[19] Frinovskii, 47-48.

[20] See Furr, "The Moscow Trials and the 'Great Terror' of 1937-1938: What the Evidence Shows," at https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/trials_ezhovshchina_update0710.html and the links to the confessions at the end of that article.

timony. We can study the attempts made during Khrushchev's and Gorbachev's time to prove that the trials were frame-ups and the defendants innocent of the charges against them. We will devote the rest of this essay to reviewing these attempts, with special attention to Rakovsky.

Khrushchev

For reasons that he never disclosed Khrushchev organized a serious and long-term campaign to disparage Stalin. This effort was first announced in Khrushchev's infamous "Secret Speech" to the 20th Party Congress on February 25, 1956.

One aspect of this campaign was to attempt to prove that the defendants at the Moscow trials, along with many other defendants at non-public trials, were innocent, framed by Stalin and his subordinates. Evidence from former Soviet archives now reveals that Khrushchev's attempt to frame Stalin preceded the "Secret Speech" and continued until Khrushchev was removed from power in 1964. Such attempts then stopped until 1987, when they resumed under Mikhail Gorbachev. Judging from the considerable documentation now available Gorbachev's associates appear to have studied and mined what Khrushchev's associates had done and also to have done some research on their own.

The reports composed by Khrushchev's and Gorbachev's associates are important in that they represent an attempt to prove that the Moscow trials were frame-ups and the defendants forced to make false confessions. As far as we can tell these reports were all fraudulent. Neither Khrushchev's nor Gorbachev's associates were able to find any evidence that any of the Moscow trials defendants were "framed," forced to falsely confess to the charges against them.[21]

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[21] Iagoda's false confession to an attempt to poison Ezhov is a special case, though not one in which he was coerced to lie by the prosecution. For one thing, there's no evidence that Iagoda was forced to confess to this. Furthermore, it seems he did so at Ezhov's suggestion, in the hope that this would save him (Iagoda) from execution, but Ezhov double-crossed

The report that began this long trail of falsehoods, Khrushchev's "Secret Speech," was also entirely a fabrication. All of the charges that Khrushchev made in it against both Stalin and Beria have been proven to be false.[22]

Serov's Report of July 7, 1956

Western anticommunist scholars and Trotskyists routinely dismiss the defendants' testimony at the Moscow trials. But Soviet anti-Stalinists never did this. On the contrary, under Khrushchev and later under Gorbachev, Soviet leaders organized major research efforts to attempt to prove that the trials were frame-ups and the defendants innocent. These were substantial undertakings, for the Soviet leadership had everything at their disposal: all the investigation materials on all defendants. Teams of researchers were employed to comb the archives, collect, and study the materials and draft the reports. Most of the materials the Soviet investigators reviewed are still top secret in Russia today, unavailable to researchers.

The post-Soviet Russian government takes the same position that the Gorbachev government took—that all the trial testimonies were fabrications and all of the defendants innocent. Consequently there is no reason to doubt that any evidence that can be used to support this preconceived notion has been made public.

This effort began with Khrushchev. On April 13, 1956, not long after the "Secret Speech" Khrushchev appointed a special commission to be chaired by Viacheslav M. Molotov. Although he had

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him. Second, this fabrication was of course known to Ezhov's men at the time and was disclosed by Frinovskii in April 1939. It is not a discovery by Khrushchev or Gorbachev and does not change our conclusion that the defendants testified as they chose – whether or not their testimony was the truth as they understood it.

[22] Furr, *Khrushchev Lied: The Evidence That Every "Revelation" of Stalin's (and Beria's) Crimes in Nikita Khrushchev's Infamous "Secret Speech" to the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on February 25, 1956, is Provably False.* Kettering, OH: Erythrós Press & Media LLC, 2011.

voted in favor of Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" Molotov was known to be a Stalin supporter. The Commission's membership included the "Stalinists" Molotov, Voroshilov, and Kaganovich but the majority were Khrushchev supporters: Suslov, Furtseva, Shvernik, Aristov, Pospelov, and Rudenko.[23]

The commission was charged to "study the materials of the public trials in the case of Bukharin, Rykov, Zinoviev, Tukhachevsky, and others." A number of the reports of this commission were published in 2003.

Serov's Reports

The July 7, 1956, report of Ivan A. Serov, head of the KGB, was published in 2013. This report remains the most comprehensive attempt known to prove that the defendants in the March 1938 Moscow trial were innocent. We will review this report here in some detail.

In 2010 Matthew Lenoe revealed that Serov had lied to the Molotov Commission in another report. Lenoe concluded that Serov did so at Khrushchev's request, in order to support Khrushchev's contention that Kirov had not been murdered by a clandestine group of Zinovievites but either at Stalin's own orders or by a "lone gunman."

Here is my discussion in *The Murder of Sergei Kirov* of Lenoe's account of Serov's falsification (all bolding and italics in my original):

> Early in his book Lenoe explains how Khrushchev 's men set out to "incriminate Stalin " (7) – in plain language, to frame him.

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[23] RKEB 2, 70.

> The 1960-1961 investigation run by the Party Control Committee (KPK) was aimed explicitly at inculpating Stalin in the Kirov murder. (8)[24]
>
> . . .
>
> To understand the positions that Serov and the USSR prosecutor's office took in their memoranda, it is necessary to see precisely what was at stake in the deliberations of the Molotov commission. The commission was charged with investigating the show trials of the later 1930s and determining whether the charges were valid. The Kirov murder and the trials of the "Leningrad Center" and "Moscow Center " that immediately followed were just the starting point of the inquiry, but everything that followed depended on these events. **If the official charges in the first two trials – that former Zinoviev supporters** / 592 / **had conspired to murder Kirov – were entirely bogus, then the indictments in all of the succeeding show trials collapsed. The latter indictments were built on the earlier ones**, albeit in a confused and illogical way. **But if there was some truth to the charge that Zinovievites conspired to kill Kirov, then that preserved the possibility of arguing that the later charges were also valid, at least in part.** ***Therefore Serov and Rudenko (or their subordinates who authored the memoranda) chose to make a clear-cut argument that Nikolaev had had no relationship at all with the ex-Zinoviev supporters convicted in the trial of the "Leningrad Center."***
>
> It appears that Serov or his boss had thought through this strategy, to deny any connection at all between Nikolaev and the Zinovievites, even before the "Secret

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[24] Furr, Kirov 166.

Speech." On January 27, 1956 the KGB destroyed central records on the case file "Svoiak," the all-union surveillance operation against the Zinovievites. It seems likely that "Svoiak" contained more evidence than Serov wanted Molotov to see, either of counter-revolutionary talk among former Zinovievites and/or of Nikolaev 's connections with the accused in the "Leningrad Center." Serov concealed other evidence of connections between Nikolaev and the ex-Zinovievites Kotolynov, Antonov, and Shatsky. The excerpts from Nikolaev 's diaries that he released to the Molotov commission in April 1956 contained no references to these men. But we know from later releases of data that Nikolaev did mention all three in his diaries. (Lenoe 591-2.)

I have put in **plain boldface** above the passage in which Lenoe outlines the importance of the Kirov case for anyone wanting to understand the rest of the Moscow "show trials." Obviously, Khrushchev and his men realized that by the evidence available in the archives, these trials and the conspiracies detailed at them did not appear to have been faked. It was they themselves who would have to fake: falsify, withhold and destroy evidence, in order to build a case that these conspiracies did not take place. I have put in *italic boldface* the passages where Lenoe summarizes some of the falsifications that Serov, Khrushchev 's man, accomplished in order to try to convince the Molotov Commission that Nikolaev was not linked to the clandestine Zinovievite conspirators. (164-5)

Lenoe ignores, or is ignorant of, the fact that Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" was entirely falsified. But Lenoe did discover that Serov, undoubtedly acting on Khrushchev's orders, set about falsifying the reopening of the Kirov murder case by destroying evidence in January 1956, before Khrushchev's "Secret Speech." What's more, as Lenoe astutely remarks, the falsification of the Kirov murder

was done in the service of falsifying the reviews of the later Moscow trials, all of which were linked to the Kirov murder.

Since Serov lied to the Molotov Commission about the Kirov murder in the service of trying to fraudulently argue that the defendants in the Moscow trials were innocent, we might suspect that Serov also lied about the March 1938 Moscow trial. In this chapter we will show that this is the case.

Serov's July 7, 1956, Report

We will not cite every bit of evidence that Serov's report of July 7, 1956, is fraudulent. Instead, we'll give details on a few important instances of Serov's falsification. Then we will proceed to study in detail Serov's attempt to prove that Rakovsky was innocent. To make it easier for readers to follow our critique we'll go through Serov's report page by page rather than by grouping Serov's falsifications in categories. All translations from Serov's report are by the present author.

> As can be seen from the materials of the case, before the arrests of BUKHARIN N. I., RYKOV A.I., KRESTINSKII N.N. and others, the organs of the NKVD and of the USSR Prosecutor's Office did not possess any verified facts on organized activities of these individuals and on the existence of a so-called "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites." (833)

This is false. By February 27, 1937, the day Bukharin was arrested during the February-March 1937 Central Committee Plenum there was a great deal of evidence against him. There had been at least two face-to-face confrontations with accusers – Piatakov and Astrov.[25] A great many others had accused Bukharin – he received 20

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[25] With Astrov: "'...Ni razu ne govorilos' otnosiltel'no terrora.' Stenogramma ochnoi stavki N.I. Bukharina s V.N. Astrovym v Politburo TsK VKP(b) 13 ianvaria 1937 g." *Istochnik* No. 2, 2001, 89-110. With Piatakov: "Stenogramma ochnykh stavok v TsK VKP(b). Dekabr' 1936 goda. No. 3. Stenogramma ochnoi stavki mezhdu Piatakovym i Bukharinym v Ts.K VKP(b) ot 7 dekabria 1936 goda." *Voprosy Istorii* 4 (2003), 3-12.

such on one day alone, February 16, 1937, as he said himself at the Plenum:

> On February 16 at 6:30 in the evening I received 20 different confessions...[26]

In this report Serov claims no fewer than 17 times that persons convicted and executed who had inculpated trial defendants in their confessions had already been "rehabilitated." Khrushchev referred to rehabilitations in the "Secret Speech." Few of these rehabilitation reports have been published. The present author studied the rehabilitation reports that had been published as of 2006 in Chapter 11 of *Khrushchev Lied*. All of them are dishonest "whitewash" jobs. Not a single one of them proves the innocence of anybody.

In Chapter 2 of our Russian-language book *1937. Pravosudie Stalina* (2010) my colleague Vladimir L. Bobrov and I published an analysis of the 1988 Rehabilitation report on Bukharin and the other defendants in the March 1938 Moscow trial, together with the evidence that this "rehabilitation" by the Soviet Supreme Court is indeed deliberately fraudulent. We will refer to it here when we consider Mikhail Frinovskii's confession of April 11, 1939, which also figures in Serov's report.

None of the rehabilitation reports yet published disproves the guilt of the person "rehabilitated." Khrushchev and, later, Gorbachev had access to all the investigation and trial materials. The fact that their researchers could not cite any evidence to exculpate any of the defendants at any of the Moscow trials means that they could not find any such evidence. Therefore, they were forced to lie.

On page 836 of Serov's report we read:

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[26] *Voprosy Istorii*, 2-3 (1992), 30. This is Bukharin's opening statement at the February-March 1937 C.C. Plenum. Bukharin enumerates a large amount of the testimony against him at that point.

> All the accused convicted in the present case pleaded guilty to the charges against them.

This is an example of "weasel words"— an equivocal statement intended to give a different impression than what the words literally mean. Bukharin did plead guilty of "the charges against him" (1938 Trial, 36). But the charges in the Indictment were not brought specifically against any individual. Instead they were brought against the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites as a group (34-35).

The accused, including Bukharin, pleaded guilty on the understanding that they were all guilty of all of the acts of the bloc whether they knew about all of them or not. However, during the trial Bukharin spent a great deal of time denying certain other specific accusations that the Prosecutor tried to convict him of.[27]

Serov claimed that an "agent" was kept in defendant S.A. Bessonov's cell where he heard Bessonov denounce the trial as a frame-up (838):

> On May 6, 1939 / Agent "Blagin" /, who was confined with BESSONOV in Solovki prison, reported that BESSONOV responded about the trial of "anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" as follows:
>
> > "The whole trial is a complete invention of the NKVD. In reality none of the accused committed any crimes..." (arch. case number 101492, Vol. 1 l.d. 27)
>
> ...
>
> On April 29, 1939 / agent "Grachev" / wrote about the same subject: "Describing the trial as a "farce," pris-

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[27] For much more detail on this question see Furr and Bobrov. "Stephen Cohen's Biography of Bukharin: A Study in the Falsehood of Khrushchev-Era 'Revelations'." *Cultural Logic* 2010. At http://clogic.eserver.org/2010/Furr.pdf

> oner BESSONOV said that everything that the accused said at the trial was coerced testimony and in fact none of them had plotted anything against Soviet power." (ibid, vol. 1, l.d. 22)

This has to be a lie. How could Bessonov know about everything that all the other defendants had done? Bukharin accepted guilt for the activities of the bloc in which he participated but claimed that he did not know everything the bloc did. Bessonov could not have known either. So if Bessonov did say this, he was deliberately lying; if he did not say it, either Serov was lying or he credulously believed and repeated something he was told by alleged agents "Blagin" and "Grachev." No matter where the gap between truth and falsehood occurred, it had to have occurred somewhere.

Serov gives no explanation as to why "agents" – evidently two different agents within a few days of one another – were being kept in Bessonov's cell after the trial, while he was serving his sentence. We will see later on that Serov was demonstrably lying when he made a similar claim about Rakovsky.

Serov made the following claim (840-841):

> Another prosecution witness, speaking at the trial in the case of the anti-Soviet bloc, former member of the Central Committee of the "Left" SRs KAMKOV B.D. according to the testimony of the arrested BRIUKHANOV, held together with him in the same cell, said to him:
>
> "All three of the recent trials are the same kind of swindle as the previous ones. There is not a drop of truth in them. Neither ZINOVIEV nor BUKHARIN was involved in any counter-revolutionary conspiratorial work. Espionage, diversion, sabotage, terrorism, killing – this is all a complete sham, fabricated by the NKVD. Confessions were extracted from the accused by torture, blackmail, beatings, threats, threats against their families, the

> arrests of their wives etc. by means of physical and mental pressure. At the same time they used bribery, appeasing the defendants, promises not to execute them, etc..." (arch. case number 967389, separate packet).

This is false. Thanks to Pierre Broué's research in the Harvard Trotsky archive in 1980 we know that both Zinoviev and Bukharin were indeed involved in "counter-revolutionary conspiratorial work" — the bloc of Zinovievists, Trotskyists, Rightists, and other oppositionists that was formed in 1932. From Jules Humbert-Droz's memoirs we know that Bukharin and some of his followers were plotting to murder Stalin as early as 1928.

What's more, Kamkov could not possibly know whether Zinoviev or Bukharin had been involved in a conspiracy or not, because no one ever claimed that Kamkov was a part of it, so he could not have known about it. Kamkov's only connection to the 1938 Moscow trial was that he had had some conspiratorial talks with Bukharin in 1918, twenty years earlier. So if Kamkov really said this, he was lying. Most likely, though, this another of Serov's fabrications.

Serov:

> While BUKHARIN was in custody the prisoner ZARITSKII N.D. had been in the same cell and when questioned on July 3, 1956, testified:
>
> "I spent 4-5 months with BUKHARIN before he was executed...
>
> During the investigation, and especially during the trial, BUKHARIN expressed indignation at the injustice of the accusations against him.... He also told me that he had good personal relations with STALIN, that in a number of instances STALIN had given him and his family assistance in domestic matters, and therefore he never could even think of murdering him. (841)

If Bukharin said this to Zaritskii he was lying. We know he was involved in a conspiracy to kill Stalin by 1928 at the latest, as he told Humbert-Droz. But given Serov's other proven lies (for more, see below) we have no reason to accept this Zaritskii quote as genuine.

Serov claims several times that a defendant's guilt is not "confirmed" because the defendant did not confess. For example, about Karakhan:

> According to RYKOV'S testimony KARAKHAN, allegedly a member of an organization of Rights, held talks on TOMSKII's instructions with representatives of fascist Germany, to whom he made it clear that in the event the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites came to power certain concessions would be made in favor of the capitalist countries.
>
> These confessions of RYKOV'S too have not been confirmed since KARAKHAN, brought to trial in 1937, **refused to confess** to any of the charges. (842)

Serov is the one lying here. A confession of Karakhan's has been published.[28] Moreover, just as confession of guilt is not firm proof of guilt, so *a fortiori* failure to confess guilt would, if genuine, not be evidence of innocence. Normally we expect that both the innocent and the guilty will usually claim innocence.

It might be the case that Karakhan refused to confirm his confessions *at his trial.* If so, this would be good evidence that he was not "pressured" in the various ways Serov claimed that others were pressured. It would not be evidence of innocence, but an attempt to force the prosecution to prove its case with other evidence.

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[28] *Lubianka* 1937-38 No. 102; online at http://istmat.info/node/31227

Serov is almost certainly lying again, as he does in the case of Piatakov (see below). Ovsiannikov names both Karakhan and Krestinskii in his confession.[29]

Concerning Dr. D.D. Pletnev, one of the defendants at the March 1938 Moscow trial who was sentenced to prison rather than to execution, Serov states the following:

> PLETNEV, who during the investigation and at trial admitted his guilt in the organization of killing A.M. GOR'KII and V.V. KUIBYSHEV on the instruction of IAGODA, after the conviction on June 11, 1939 addressed the following statement to Comrade V.M. Molotov:
>
> > "I was sentenced in the Bukharin case. During the investigation I admitted the accusations against me, and at trial I did not renounce them. I was slandered...." (846)

This is false. At trial Pletnev pleaded guilty but did indeed renounce his guilty plea and claimed that he had not taken part in any of the murders. But under questioning by Vyshinskii Pletnev conceded that he had failed to inform the authorities once Iagoda had been removed from office even though he had a year to do so.

> VYSHINSKY: Why did you not refuse to be implicated in this criminal plan?
>
> PLETNEV: There were threats on the part of Yagoda directed against me.
>
> VYSHINSKY: Why did you attach such serious Importance to Yagoda's threats?
>
> PLETNEV: After all, he was People's Commissar of Internal Affairs.

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[29] *Lubianka* 1937-38 No. 228; online at http://istmat.info/node/32387

VYSHINSKY: Well, and when he was People's Commissar no longer, what restrained you then from coming to the appropriate bodies and performing your duty as a citizen?

PLETNEV: I considered the question finished, dead.

VYSHINSKY: Dead are your victims, but the question is still alive.

PLETNEV: Now I see that it is alive.

. . .

KOMMODOV: Would your anti-Soviet sentiments be sufficient in themselves to prompt you to commit a crime in connection with your work, if there had not been Yagoda's instructions?

PLETNEV: Under no circumstances. (1938 Trial, 594, 596)

In its sentence the court accepted his claim that he had agreed to help in the maltreatment of Gorky because he had been threatened by Iagoda, chief (People's Commissar) of the NKVD. The court agreed that Pletnev had not taken part in any killing but had been a part of the conspiracy and had not informed on it when he had had the chance to do so.

> PLETNEV, Dmitry Dmitrievich, as not having directly taken an active part in the causing of death of Comrades V. V. Kuibyshev and A. M. Gorky, although he was an accessory... (1938 Trial, 799).

According to Serov, Pletnev claimed that he had always been loyal to the USSR:

> All my life since October of 1917 I have been loyal to the Soviet regime and under the leadership of the

> party have given all my strength and knowledge to my homeland. (846)

Serov is lying again. At the trial Pletnev confessed that he had been a member of the Cadet Party (K-D – Constitutional Democratic Party), an intensely anticommunist party. This has been confirmed by V.D. Topolianskii, who has published a series of articles to "rehabilitate" Pletnev's reputation.[30]

Pletnev's appeal for a more lenient sentence has now been published. Rather than claim innocence, in it he admits his guilt once again.

> I have confessed my full guilt of the accusation against me. My deportment during the investigation and at the trial are testimony to this.
>
> I ask the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet to mitigate the sentence imposed upon me. (Protsess Bukharina 2013, 749-50)

Serov wrote:

> Questioned as a witness former NKVD man LERNER, who was involved in the investigation of this case, said the following in an interrogation in July 1956:
>
> "I did not lead the investigation of the IAGODA case to its conclusion, the last 6-8 months I was doing other things and had no relationship with the investigation of the case. (856)

This is a lie, either by Lerner or Serov. Lerner signed the interrogation of Iagoda dated December 28, 1937, and the two face-to-face

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[30] "Firm democratic convictions characteristic of the Russian intelligentsia of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, and an inexhaustible drive to serve their country brought ... D.D. Pletnev to the ... Constitutional-Democratic Party." - "Doctor D.D. Pletnev." In *Repressirovannaia nauka*. Spb.: 'Nauka" 1991, p. 307.

confrontations between Iagoda and Kriuchkov and between Iagoda and Pletnev, both dated January 5, 1938, less than two months before the trial began.[31] So if Lerner, in fact, made the statement, he was lying, and either Serov did not care that Lerner was lying, or he himself was lying. Either way, Molotov would never know.

It is easy to imagine that former NKVD man Lerner wanted to place himself as far away from the investigation as possible. We discuss this matter later.

Serov's report is dated July 7, 1956. Therefore Lerner had – supposedly – made this statement only a few days earlier. If so, he probably made it expressly for Serov's report. If so, Lerner must have been persuaded to lie so his testimony would be helpful to Serov's attempt to "prove" all the trial defendants were innocent. This provable lie attributed to Lerner is good circumstantial evidence that the other NKVD men and "agents" quoted by Serov were also lying.

At the end of his report Serov claimed to the Commission that the published transcript of the 1938 Moscow had been falsified.

> During the interrogation of IAGODA at the trial the question of his guilt in the murder of KUIBYSHEV was not at all explained, as can be seen from the transcript.
>
> However, the transcript was filled out as follows: "VYSHINSKII. Do you plead guilty in the organization of the murder of KUIBYSHEV?
>
> IAGODA. I do." (857)

In fact, Iagoda had confessed to this in pretrial interrogations.

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[31] Genrikh Iagoda. *Narkom vnutrennikhdel SSSR, General'niy komissar gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti. Sbornik dokumentov*. Kazan', 1997, 218, 227, 230.

> IAGODA: Yes, I have hidden things. But now there's no point in my hiding anything.
>
> I admit that in addition to Max, V.R. Menzhinskii, V.V. Kuibyshev, and A.M. Gor'kii were also killed in the same manner by my order.
>
> I ask that you record that, if I am the only person to blame in Menzhinskii's death, the deaths of V.V. Kuibyshev and A.M. Gor'kii were organized on the direct command of the unified center of the Right-Trotskyist organization, which (order) was given personally to me by A.S. Enukidze, a member of this center. (Genrikh Iagoda, 210)

In a good example of "bias by omission" Serov hid this fact from the Molotov Commission.

Serov's Report and Frinovskii's Confession Statement of April 11, 1939

Mikhail Frinovskii, Ezhov's second-in-command in the NKVD until removed in late 1938, made an important confession statement on April 11, 1939. It is not an interrogation but a letter to Lavrentii Beria, the head (People's Commissar) for Internal Affairs who had replaced Ezhov in November 1938. In August 1938 Beria had been appointed Ezhov's second-in-command. This was a signal that the Politburo knew something was wrong at the NKVD and no longer trusted Ezhov.

The difference between letters of confession and interrogations is an interesting one. Letters such as Frinovskii's appear to have been a suspect's attempt to "get out in front of" the investigation. The idea was evidently to volunteer information that the prosecution did not know, thus demonstrating one's sincerity. Confessions dragged out of a suspect through interrogations or face-to-face confrontations with other accusers merely demonstrated that the suspect in question had not yet "disarmed" and would only confess to crimes when further denial was useless.

Frinovskii's letter has been repeatedly and dishonestly quoted in various Soviet documents in attempts to prove that the Moscow trials defendants were innocent but forced to falsely confess. In this letter, the full text of which was not published until 2006, Frinovskii actually testifies to the guilt, not the innocence, of the Moscow trial defendants. Serov carefully omits those parts of Frinovskii's statement and edits the rest to make it appear as though the opposite was the case.

Clearly the Molotov Commission did not have the actual text of Frinovskii's confession. A glance at it would have refuted Serov's, and therefore Khrushchev's, whole case. In the following section we will quote the passages from Frinovskii's confession that Serov quotes, and then the passages Serov omits in which Frinovskii reveals that the defendants were in fact guilty.

Serov wrote:

> The investigation of the case of the so-called "Anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" and its consideration at trial, conducted between 1937 and early 1938, was characterized by massive repression of Soviet citizens, by the most serious violations of socialist legality, by severe beatings of prisoners and by various and provocative techniques by means of which the investigating authorities extorted confessions from the prisoners and the courts handed down clearly unjustified sentences. (849)

Frinovskii did say this about Ezhov's practices in general. But he specifically excepted the March 1938 Trial. Moreover, he revealed that Ezhov himself was a part of the conspiracy, along with the 1938 Trial defendants.

Here is one part that Serov omitted:

> The preparation of the trial of Rykov, Bukharin, Krestinskii, Yagoda and others

An active participant in investigations generally, Ezhov kept himself aloof from the preparation of this trial. Before the trial there took place the face-to-face confrontations of the suspects, interrogations, and refining, in which Ezhov did not participate. He spoke for a long time with Yagoda, and that talk concerned, in the main, of his assuring Yagoda that he would not be shot.

Ezhov had conversations several times with Bukharin and Rykov and also in order to calm them assured them that under no circumstances would they be shot.

Ezhov had one conversation with Bulanov, and began this conversation in the presence of the investigator and myself, and finished the conversation one on one, having asked us to leave.

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At that moment Bulanov had begun talking about the poisoning of Ezhov. What the conversation was about Ezhov did not say. When he asked us to enter again he said: "Behave yourself well at the trial – I will ask that you not be shot." After the trial Ezhov always expressed regret about Bulanov. At the time of the executions Ezhov suggested shooting Bulanov first and he himself did not enter the building where the shootings took place.

Here Ezhov unquestionably was ruled by the necessity of covering up his own ties with the arrested leaders of the Right who were going into the public trial.

Frinovskii also confirmed the guilt of Zinoviev and Kamenev and of the Rightists, including Iagoda:

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During this conversation I confided in Evdokimov and told him that I had fallen in with the Rights in my work.

In the same year, 1933, Yagoda, after I had clashed with him on an official question, began once again to bring me closer to him with the help of Bulanov. Bulanov would often call me to his dacha in the guise of going fishing and playing billiards. During one of these trips to Bulanov's on a free day at his dacha Yagoda arrived, who after dinner and drinks had a conversation with me in a separate room.

Yagoda began the conversation by saying I was not correct in opposing him and that here, obviously, the hand of Evdokimov was in play, and then he said to me: **"Keep this in mind: I know that you remain a Rightist, that you are leading work, that I also know,** and would it not be better for you to come to terms with the situation that exists with us in the central apparatus, to get off your high horse and obey me." And then, continuing the conversation, Yagoda asked me: "How are things in the GUPVO, you have a lot of assistants there, wouldn't it be better to get rid of somebody? What do you think – who would it be best to keep, Kruchinkin or Lepin?"

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Without waiting for my answer Yagoda said that Kruchinkin was a reliable man. I understood that Kruchinkin was connected with him in some criminal activity.

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At that same time, 1934, I had several meetings with Evdokimov when he came to Moscow. At these meetings he gradually disclosed to me his practical work and spoke about the work of the center of the Rights

and around the USSR. In particular he told me that he had a number of people inside the apparatus of the GPU, and named Rud', Dagin, Raev, Kursky, Dement'ev, Gorbach, and others. He said that he was beginning to have contacts in the national oblasts: in Dagestan, though Mamedbekov, in Chechnya – Gorsheev or Gorshenin, and then said that the only person he had trouble with was Kalmykov, who had his own line of work, and Evdokimov couldn't cut him off in any way, but he characterized Kalmykov as a man wholly "ours", a Rightist, but evidently one who had his own line of work.

I asked him what was being done generally in the USSR? Evdokimov said that large-scale work was going on, a whole number of people who had important positions in a number of other oblasts of the USSR, had crossed over to the Rights. And here he stated: "You see how we must now conduct the struggle with the Central Committee: at one time we fought against the movement of uprisings, and now we ourselves must seek out the threads, ties to this movement and, in order to organize it, we must go down to its base. This is very complicated and dangerous work but without the base – the secretaries of the regional committees, the chairmen of the regional executive committees (RIKs) or men who have contacts with the countryside – we will not be able to lead the movement of uprisings, and that is one of the fundamental tasks that presents itself to us."

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In 1935 **Evdokimov** began to ask me whether **Yagoda's** hand were in the assassination of Kirov and whether I had any facts about **this?** At the same time he indicated that if **Yagoda** had participated in this affair it was a bad move, not from the viewpoint of sympathy about the loss of Kirov, but from the viewpoint

of complicating the position and of the repressions which began soon after Kirov's murder.

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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 will be able to extract himself from this whole affair. I just don't understand Yagoda 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."

Serov claimed that many trial defendants were "specially prepared" and sometimes told Ezhov that their confessions were false:

> Those prisoners who were being made ready for the trial and for face-to-face confrontations to be carried out with participation by leaders of the Party and government were especially carefully prepared by the investigating authorities. Here everything was done strictly according to a developed plan and the prisoners repeatedly rehearsed "their" confessions.

As you know, some of the persons involved in the case of the Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites before their criminal prosecution were given face-to-face confrontations where prisoners previously arrested accused them of committing serious crimes against the state.

From the confessions, given after his arrest, of the former Deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR FRINOVSKII it may be seen that specially in-

> structed prisoners were brought forth at these face-to-face confrontations.

FRINOVSKII confessed about this:

> At first the investigator, then the chief of the department, prepared the prisoners in a special way. The preparation consisted in the reading of the confessions that the prisoner had given against the person with whom the face-to-face confrontation was about to be conducted. They explained how the face-to-face confrontation would be conducted, what unexpected questions might be presented to the prisoner and how he should answer.
>
> In essence what happened was an agreement and a rehearsal for the upcoming face-to-face confrontation. After that EZHOV would call the prisoner to himself, or pretending that he had by chance dropped in to the investigator's room where the prisoner was sitting he would speak to him about the upcoming confrontation and would ask whether he felt himself strong, would he confirm his confessions, and by the way, would mention that members of the government would be present at the face-to-face confrontation.
>
> Usually EZHOV was nervous before such face-to-face confrontations even after he had had a talk with the prisoner. There were cases when the prisoner
>
> / 856 /
>
> would state, during the conversation with EZHOV, that his confessions were not true, that he had been falsely accused. (arch. case number 975181, Vol. 2, l.d. 37-38)

As we saw above, Frinovskii explicitly stated that Ezhov did *not* do this in the case of the 1938 Moscow Trial.

Serov also omitted what Frinovskii said immediately before this passage: one of many acknowledgements by Frinovskii that a conspiracy did in fact exist, and that he, Frinovskii, was a party to them:

> In carrying out the investigation of the case of Yagoda and the Chekist conspirators, and also in those of other arrested persons, especially the Rights, the system of "correction" of the transcripts set up by Ezhov pursued the goal of preserving the cadres of conspirators and preventing any possibility of the failure of our participation in the anti-Soviet conspiracy.
>
> I can cite dozens and hundreds of examples when the defendants under arrest did not give up the persons who were tied to them in anti-Soviet work.
>
> The most glaring examples were the conspirators Yagoda, Bulanov, Zakovsky, Kruchinkin and others, who knew about my participation in the conspiracy and did not confess about it. (47)

Serov could not reveal these matters to the Molotov Commission. Serov's and Khrushchev's aim was to claim that there had been no conspiracies and all the defendants had been innocent. Frinovskii's statement proves the opposite.

More of Serov's Omissions from Frinovskii's Confession

Throughout his report Serov sought to undermine the validity of the confessions of Moscow trials defendants and of other defendants – in fact, of all confessions obtained by the NKVD. In so doing Serov made heavy use of Frinovskii's confession statement of April 11, 1939, which had also been obtained by the NKVD.

However, Serov failed to cite the following dramatic passage from Frinovskii's confession:

I move now to the practical hostile work which was led by Ezhov, myself, and other conspirators in the NKVD.

Investigative work

The investigative apparatus in all departments of the NKVD was divided into "investigator-bonebreakers," "bonebreakers," and "ordinary" investigators.

What did these groups represent and who were they?

"Investigator-bonebreakers" were chosen basically from among the conspirators or persons who were compromised. They had unsupervised recourse to beating arrested persons and in a very short time obtained "confessions" and knew how to write up transcripts in a grammatical and elegant fashion.

In this category belong: Nikolayev, Agas, Ushakov, Listengurt, Evgen'ev, Zhupakhin, Minaev, Davydov, Al'tman, Geiman, Litvin, Leplevsky, Karelin, Kerzon, Iamnitsky, and others.

Since the quantity of those under arrest who confessed due to such methods grew daily and there was a great need for investigators who knew how to compose interrogations, the so-called "investigator-bonebreakers" began, each on his own, to create groups of simple "bonebreakers."

The group of "bonebreakers" consisted of technical workers. These men did not know the evidence concerning the suspect, but were sent to the Lefortovo [prison in Moscow], summoned the accused, and set to beating him. The beatings continued up to the moment that the accused agreed to give a confession.

The remaining group of investigators took care of interrogations of those accused of less serious crimes

and were left to themselves, without leadership from anyone.

The further process of investigation was as follows: the investigator conducted the interrogation and instead of a transcript put together notes. After several such inter-

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rogations a draft transcript was put together by the investigator. The draft went for "correction" to the chief of the appropriate department, and from him, still unsigned, for "review" to former People's Commissar Ezhov and in rare cases to myself. Ezhov looked through the transcript, made changes and additions. In most cases those under arrest did not agree with the editing of the transcript and stated that they had not said that during the investigation and refused to sign it.

Then the investigators would remind the arrested party about the "bonebreakers," and the person under investigation would sign the transcript. Ezhov produced the "correction" and "editing" of transcripts, in most cases, never having seen with his own eyes the person under arrest and if he did see him, then only during a momentary inspection of the cells or investigative rooms.

With such methods the investigations supplied the names.

In my opinion I would speak the truth if I declared, in general, that very often the confessions were given by the investigators, and not by those under investigation.

Did the leadership of the People's Commissariat, that is I and Ezhov, know about this? We knew.

> How did we react? Honestly speaking – not at all, and Ezhov even encouraged it. No one bothered to find out to which of the accused physical pressure was applied. **And since the majority of the persons who were employing these methods were themselves enemies of the people and conspirators,** then clearly false accusations took place, we took false accusations and arrested and shot innocent people who had been slandered by enemies of the people from among those under arrest and by enemies of the people among the investigators. Real investigation was wiped out.

It is obvious why Serov omitted the passages quoted earlier where Frinovskii made it clear that the Moscow trials defendants were guilty. But why did Serov omit *this* passage? At first glance this omission is hard to understand since the passage above makes a strong claim that many NKVD confessions were coerced, many defendants innocent.

A possible explanation is that it focused attention not on the Moscow trials defendants but on the criminal behavior of Ezhov and his men. Emphasis on them might lead to consideration of what had happened to them – their arrests, interrogations, trials, punishment, etc. This was done by Lavrentii Beria, who replaced Ezhov as head of the NKVD in November 1938. Khrushchev hated and demonized Beria even more than he did Stalin.

Under Beria a great many sentences handed down under Ezhov were reversed. Hundreds of thousands of wrongfully-convicted people were released from camps (the GULAG) and prisons. Hundreds of Ezhov's NKVD men, who had done the dirty work of framing hundreds of thousands of innocent Soviet citizens, were arrested, investigated, interrogated, tried, and convicted. Many were sentenced to death, including both Ezhov and Frinovskii. Many others were imprisoned.

Perhaps anything that seriously involved Beria was a taboo subject among all these people, Khrushchevites and non-Khrushchevites alike. Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Voroshilov had been

parties to the illegal arrest and murder of Beria, who had been a member of the Presidium (name of the Politburo after October 1952) and a government minister. This treatment of Beria in fact amounted to a kind of *coup d'état.* It was a cardinal event; nothing like this had ever happened before in Soviet history. And the charges against Beria were faked, trumped-up after the fact, as even Khrushchev later admitted. In the conspiracy to oust and then to kill Beria the "Stalinists" in the Presidium were just as guilty as Khrushchev and his supporters were.

Or perhaps Serov simply did not want his Report to be "top-heavy" with quotations from Frinovskii. That might stimulate the "Stalinists" on the Molotov Commission to request a copy of Frinovskii's confession statement. Then they would have seen that Frinovskii actually testified to the real existence of the various conspiracies. And Serov could not permit that because it would have made it clear that his report was dishonest. It would have exposed Khrushchev's scheme to rewrite, by means of lies and omissions, all Soviet history of the Stalin period.

Evaluating and Using NKVD Confessions

A common practice today, even by historians who should know better, is to reject all Stalin-era Soviet political confessions. Serov could not do this, of course. All his counter-evidence against the Moscow Trials was also composed of confession materials:

* Reports by jailhouse snitches are at least as questionable evidence as confessions given to NKVD investigators. Serov relied very heavily on them in this Report. As we shall see, it appears that *all* of those cited as "evidence" by Serov were fabrications.

* Claims of innocence by convicted prisoners like Bessonov, Kamkov, and Pletnev, even if genuine, are highly questionable. What does a convicted prisoner have to lose by claiming innocence and compulsion? Especially when he knows that Ezhov has been ousted and charged with framing and executing a great many innocent people? Serov's report relies heavily on such claims as well. We have also shown on other grounds that these claims are faked.

* The statements by former NKVD men quoted by Serov are either proven lies or, at the very least, highly suspect. At least some of these men, like Lerner and Aronson, were questioned specifically for Serov's report. They had every reason to fear terrible retribution from Khrushchev and Serov if they did not do what was wanted of them.

Former NKVD colonel Boris V. Rodos had been arrested by Khrushchev in 1953, interrogated at length about his role in the repressions of the 1930s, and shot on April 20, 1956, less than two months before Serov questioned NKVD man Aronson. Other coworkers of Beria's were also arrested, charged with crimes, and either were shot (e.g. Solomon Mil'shtein) or had committed suicide in prison before they could be shot (e.g. Lavrentii F. Tsanava). Eight of Beria's chief assistants had been executed in December 1953 after a secret trial and on what appear to be phony charges. But Rodos, Mil'shtein, Tsanava, and others suffered their fates in 1955 or 1956, not long before Serov's report. All the materials in their cases are still top-secret in Russia today.

Pavel A. Sudoplatov, by 1953 a Lieutenant-General in the MVD (successor to the NKVD), was arrested in August 1953. By his own testimony he was asked by Roman Rudenko, Chief Prosecutor and a Khrushchev man, to make statements implicating Beria (either arrested or killed on June 26, 1953) in crimes that Sudoplatov either knew nothing about or knew were fictitious. When Sudoplatov refused he was arrested on the capital crime of treason. Sudoplatov succeeded in faking insanity, was sentenced to 15 years in prison, served his full sentence, and was released on time in 1968.

In his memoirs Sudoplatov states that he saw General Ivan I. Maslennikov, who had also worked under Beria in the armed forces of the NKVD. Sudoplatov heard that Rudenko had demanded that Maslennikov support the false story that Beria had planned to surround Moscow with MVD troops and stage a *coup*

d'état. "Such a plan never existed in reality, and Maslennikov decided it was better to commit suicide than be arrested."[32]

Former NKVD men knew what had happened to Mil'shtein, Tsanava, Rodos, Sudoplatov, and many others. What's more, all this purported material from former NKVD men comes from Serov. We know that Serov was deliberately lying to the Molotov Commission by destroying inconvenient evidence, concealing the existence of other evidence (for example, Frinovskii's confession statement), and deliberately misinterpreting yet other testimony – for example by falsely claiming that Iagoda had retracted his confession at trial.[33]

Assuming that Serov really did question them, the former NKVD men would have had every reason to tell him whatever it was that Khrushchev wanted to hear.

Evaluating NKVD Confessions

Serov would not have wanted to give the impression that NKVD confessions obtained under the reviled Beria, who had replaced Ezhov in late 1938 and was investigating Ezhov's falsifications, were more reliable than those obtained under Iagoda or Ezhov. That was, however, the implication of his using Frinovskii's statement.

If one is going to reject one set of confessions – in this case, those obtained under Iagoda and Ezhov – then why not reject those obtained under Beria as well? And that would mean rejecting Frinovskii's. After all, could not Beria's men have threatened or tortured Frinovskii to claim that the confessions obtained under Ezhov were largely false except for those involving the Moscow trials defendants? Plus that Ezhov and his men, Frinovskii included,

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[32] Sudoplatov, *Spetsoperatsii*, Chapter 12: "The Plot Against Beria and His Downfall." Essentially the same version is in his book *Razvedka i Kreml'* (1996), 432-33.

[33] See Furr, *Sergei Kirov*, Chapter 15.

were all criminals who had now been found out and neutralized by the clever Beria? As we have just noted, this same logic could apply to the "jailhouse snitch" statements, claims of innocence by defendants already convicted, and even to the statements of the former NKVD men which were, after all, also obtained by Serov's KGB, the successor to the NKVD.

If all confessions are to be discounted as potentially faked then the only remaining category of evidence is material evidence, where any exists. But a moment's thought reveals that material evidence too can be faked. In fact it may be easier to forge false letters, maps, passports, to plant false weapons, etc., than to force lifelong revolutionaries to falsely incriminate themselves and others. Unscrupulous investigators who will stoop to anything -- to torture, maltreatment, threats against family and friends – would not scruple at forgery, planting false material evidence, and the kind of deceptions that we know Serov practiced.

But such a chain of reasoning leads to an absurd conclusion: *all* evidence, anywhere, should be disregarded since it *might* have been faked! Nothing remains, so historical research is impossible. Of course historians in other fields do not reason like this. But this kind of "logic" is common in the field of Soviet history of the Stalin period.

What other historians commonly do, but historians of the Moscow trials and the opposition conspiracies in the USSR during the 1930s seldom do, is to follow some elementary rules for dealing with evidence that help to assure an objective assessment of that evidence. Such rules include the following:

* No evidence should ever be rejected *a priori*. It is always invalid to say that some evidence should be disregarded because it "might" have been faked. Specific reasons are required for rejecting any evidence. We need "evidence that evidence has been faked" before it can be rejected. This includes Stalin-era Soviet confessions.

To put this another way: the statement "X *might* have been forced to confess falsely" is a hypothesis. All hypotheses require evidence to sustain them. That evidence must then be evaluated.

That is what we are doing in the present essay. Serov claimed – i.e. stated the hypothesis – that the confessions of Rakovsky and others were untrue, obtained by threats of some kind. In the present essay we show that Serov's evidence to support his hypothesis was itself faked by Serov.

A hypothesis that is not supported by evidence does not have to be disproven – it "falls of its own weight." If there is no evidence that supports the hypothesis that "X was forced to confess" then that hypothesis must be discarded. We must accept the confession as valid unless and until evidence that tends to disprove it should come to light. Then we must study that evidence and if necessary amend or discard our original conclusion. This is the method we have employed in this essay by studying Serov's report.

* Even when we do have evidence that a confession or other evidence is faked, it can often still provide important evidence for some other hypothesis. Serov's July 7, 1956, report is a good example. We can prove it is full of deliberately false statements. Yet important conclusions can be drawn from it. Serov's report does not do what Serov wanted it to do: it does not provide reliable evidence to support the hypothesis that Rakovsky and the other Moscow trials defendants were framed. But it does provide additional evidence for a different hypothesis: that Khrushchev and Serov were themselves trying to frame Ezhov and Stalin. (They also tried to frame Beria).

* All evidence should be verified to the extent possible by comparison with other evidence. The likelihood that numerous pieces of evidence from different sources will all have been faked in some coordinated way, yet without leaving any trace of that faking process, becomes so remote that it can be disregarded.

Therefore confessions and statements made by prisoners under NKVD investigation and other Stalin-era documents must be stud-

ied in the same way as all other evidence. We have a great deal of evidence from different sources that corroborates the guilt of many of the Moscow trials defendants. At the same time, we have no credible evidence that tends to prove they were framed. Serov and Khrushchev's aides, and later Gorbachev and his aides, tried to prove this. But we can now prove that it is they who were fabricating false evidence.

* In the case of Stalin-era research we must guard against unexamined assumptions. This is what I have called "the anti-Stalin paradigm." We should not *assume* that Stalin deliberately framed innocent people, or lied, or fabricated evidence. Like any hypothesis, this has to be supported with evidence. In practice, I have yet to find a single instance where Stalin did any of these things.

By contrast, even a committed Trotskyist like Pierre Broué has found many examples of Trotsky's deliberate lying. Yet I have never yet encountered an example of any scholar rejecting something Trotsky said on the grounds that "he might be lying since we know he lied in other instances." The fact that a person – say, Trotsky – provably lied in some instances does not mean that he lied, or "probably lied," in other instances or that everything he said or wrote can be disregarded. This illogical logic is only applied to Stalin himself and to Stalin-era materials like NKVD interrogations, statements by prisoners, and Moscow Trial transcripts.

To lie is a human trait. Anyone, at any time, may be either lying or telling the truth (at least what the person believes is the truth). In particular, the fact that a person is under investigation, under arrest, in prison, etc., does not mean that they are lying. Nor does it necessarily mean that they are "more likely" to be lying. Likewise, people who are not under any kind of compulsion at all also might be either lying or telling the truth. There is no formula such as, for example, "People who are under arrest are X% more likely to lie than people who are at liberty."

A statement by someone who is at liberty and free from threat cannot be *assumed* to be true. Likewise a statement by someone under arrest cannot be *assumed* to be false. There is no justifica-

tion for simply discounting NKVD interrogations, letters by prisoners, Moscow Trials transcripts, etc., and no rational reason for thinking them "more (or less) likely" to be false. The only basis for routinely discounting NKVD interrogations, letters by prisoners, Moscow Trials transcripts, etc., is an unsupported belief that everything the NKVD did, at least in the Stalin era, was dishonest. But this is circular reasoning – assuming that which must have evidence to support it – or begging the question. All evidence from all persons, whether under arrest or at liberty, must be scrutinized with appropriate skepticism.

Pierre Broué found many instances where Trotsky was lying. These lies have serious implications for the study of Trotsky's works of the 1930s. Yet Trotsky's proven lies are either overlooked or given only cursory attention. By contrast it is hard to find examples where Stalin lied during this same period. And no one has yet found any evidence that Moscow Trials defendants were forced to lie either at trial or in those interrogations and letters that we have from them.

All this should be obvious. It needs to be emphasized only because so few researchers approach the subject of Soviet history of the 1930s with anything like objectivity. As regards Stalin and the Moscow Trials almost any claim that he was dishonest or that the evidence was fabricated, no matter how lacking in substance, is accepted.

Serov's Attempt to "Rehabilitate" Rakovsky

Serov's report is the most sustained attempt yet discovered to prove that Rakovsky was innocent. We will examine each passage that deals with Rakovsky.

Rakovsky was arrested after many accusations against him.

> In February 1937, after EZHOV'S report to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), BUKHARIN and RYKOV were arrested.

> Somewhat earlier RAKOVSKY Kh. G. had been arrested on a criminal charge.
>
> In a special communication to J.V. STALIN, asking for his consent to arrest RAKOVSKY, the NKVD of the USSR pointed out that he had been exposed as one of the active participants of the Trotsky-Zinoviev terrorist organization by the testimony of PIATAKOV, KASPAROVA, NIKOLAEV, TER-VAGANIAN and others, as well as by material from undercover agents.[34]
>
> In fact, there were no materials in the possession of the NKVD from agents concerning criminal activities by RAKOVSKY, while the confessions of the above-named persons were vague and uncertain in their reliability. (834)

Even if true – Serov, of course, cannot simply be believed -- the fact that no NKVD agents had evidence against Rakovsky is not evidence that he was innocent. Nor does Serov explain what was "vague and doubtful" about the confessions.

> Thus, TER-VAGANIAN, citing SMIRNOV I.N., confessed that in 1932 RAKOVSKY "wrote a new counterrevolutionary document." But there were no confessions by SMIRNOV along these lines.

Serov does not claim that Smirnov denied it, only that he did not mention it himself. If true – this comes from Serov so we can never be sure -- this only means that no one asked Smirnov about Rakovsky's document. For if Smirnov had been asked about this document and had denied it, Serov would have said so.

> The prisoner NIKOLAEV gave vague confessions that RAKOVSKY belonged to a reserve "especially secret center" consisting of PIATAKOV, SOKOL' NIKOV and

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[34] *Lubianka* 1937-1938, Doc. No. 11.

> RADEK, about which he supposedly learned from DREITSER. However, none of the individuals named by NIKOLAEV stated this in their testimony.

It appears that Serov is prevaricating here, playing with words. Piatakov testified many times about a "reserve center" of the bloc, which was then changed into a "parallel center." Nikolaev used the words "especially secret center" to refer to the same group. Piatakov, Sokol'nikov, and Radek were defendants at the second Moscow Trial of January 1937. It would be logical for them to keep quiet about any members of their leading group who had not yet been arrested. Their pretrial investigative materials are all still top-secret in Russia today.

None of these men was completely honest in their confessions. We know that Sokol'nikov had received a letter from Trotsky because the return receipt remains in the Trotsky Papers at Houghton Library, Harvard University. But at trial Sokol'nikov denied receiving any letters from Trotsky. The prosecution did not challenge him on this point. Evidently it did not know about this. Also, Karl Radek concealed Tukhachevsky's role in the opposition conspiracies.

> KASPAROVA confessed that RAKOVSKY hypocritically announced his departure from the opposition, but in reality did not break with it and in 1933, outlining his anti-Soviet views, informed her in his letters about the creation on a terrorist basis of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc.

We can be sure that this is true. As we have seen, Pierre Broué believed that all "capitulators" were lying and this accords with the more extensive evidence we have today. One has to wonder why Serov included these remarks in his report. He does not attempt to refute them.

Serov continued:

> To RAKOVSKY's case was also attached an excerpt from the testimony of PIATAKOV in which it is stated that "RAKOVSKY has his own line of contact with

> TROTSKY." In reality PIATAKOV did not give any such testimony.

Serov is lying. In the "Document No. 11" which we quoted above there is such an excerpt from Piatakov's testimony. The passage in question reads as follows:

> Concerning RAKOVSKY TROTSKY said that it was essential to talk with him and give him a push in his work along the lines of the Trotskyist organization. From this I deduced that RAKOVSKY had some personal line of contact with TROTSKY.[35]

If this is the same document Serov quoted from, then he was using "weasel words." Piatakov did not state for a fact that "Rakovsky had his own line of contact with Trotsky" – he "deduced" it.

Most of Piatakov's pretrial testimony remains unavailable to researchers. However, we now have one of Piatakov's pretrial statements in which he summarizes his conversation with Trotsky during his, Piatakov's, clandestine flight to Norway in December 1935. In this statement he makes the following references to Rakovsky:

> I should add that among the specific persons whose names were tossed out by Trotsky during this conversation were mentioned: RADEK, SOKOL'NIKOV, SEREBRAKOV, MURALOV, BELOBORODOV, RAKOVSKY, Budu MDIVANI, V.M. SMIRNOV, SAPRONOV, BUKHARIN, RYKOV, TOMSKII, UGLANOV, PREOBRAZHENSKII, PUTNA, PRIMAKOV, KRESTINSKII.
>
> Concerning these persons were had the following conversations. ... About RAKOVSKY and PREOBRAZ-

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[35] Special communication of N.I. Ezhov to J.V. Stalin Concerning Kh. G. Rakovsky with appendix of excerpts from confessions concerning his case. Jan. 25 1937 No. 55464. *Lubianka* 1937-1938, No. 11, p. 58.

> HENSKII he said that it was essential to have a talk with them and spur them on in their work.[36]

Even this one document makes clear how Piatakov could have deduced that Rakovsky had "his own line of contact with Trotsky." Trotsky knew that Rakovsky was not working actively enough. This is exactly what he is quoted as having said in the document Serov quotes and in Document No. 11, above. The only thing lacking in this statement is Piatakov's deduction about Rakovsky's "own line of contact."

A lie as clearly proven as this one requires that we look with suspicion upon everything else that Serov wrote, not in order to dismiss out of hand, but rather to investigate more closely with a critical eye. So we will continue our study of Serov's report. As it happens, Serov's falsifications will lead us to some valuable evidence about Rakovsky and Trotsky.

Rakovsky in Serov's Report

Later in Serov's report we read:

> All the accused convicted in the present case pleaded guilty to the charges against them. However, the verification process revealed that for the most part, these confessions had been made under compulsion and did not reflect the truth.
>
> For example, RAKOVSKY Kh. G., who confessed his active participation in the "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" and his collaboration with Japanese and British intelligence / 837 / services, after the trial repeatedly protested his innocence and claimed that during the investigation he was forced to give confessions known to be false. / Agent "Anri" / who was held together

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[36] Piatakov, Statement to Ezhov December 19-20, 1936.

with RAKOVSKY in the Orel prison, reported on March 17, 1940 that RAKOVSKY:

> "completely denies his guilt and considers everything that took place at the trial and in the investigation was nothing but a farce. Sometimes he casually asserted that he gave all his testimony under pressure "(arch. case number 300956, v. 9, l.d.181 [=archival 'delo' number, volume number, page number])

Another, / agent "Dima" /, who was also with RAKOVSKY in the same cell, reported on April 2, 1941 that in conversations with him RAKOVSKY had categorically denied any involvement in the Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, said that his interrogation protocols had been falsified and then declared "I was indignant when ARONSON (investigator) wrote the protocol that stated that we wanted to restore capitalism. Listen – I said – that is illiterate. He threw the crumpled protocol in my face. Generally, when I did not write the way they wanted me to, they always did that...." (ibid, l.d. 322)

Questioned on July 3, 1956 former employee of the NKVD ARONSON Ia.A. confirmed that the investigation against RAKOVSKY was indeed conducted in an atmosphere of serious violation of the norms of socialist legality.

> After the trial RAKOVSKY, citing his advanced age and illness, repeatedly made applications in which he petitioned for clemency. However, RAKOVSKY's requests remained unsatisfied. (836-7)

Even if it were true that Rakovsky retracted his confession to his cellmates, who just happened to be "agents," that would not be good evidence that he was innocent. It is common for convicted prisoners to claim that they were innocent.

That said, there are some points of interest here:

* What were "agents" doing in Rakovsky's cell long after his conviction? We'll return to this question below.

* Rakovsky testified at trial that he was legally a participant in the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, although he was not aware of all of activities:

> I confessed to all my crimes. What would it matter for the substance of the case if I should attempt to establish here before you the fact that I learned many of the crimes, and of the most appalling crimes of the "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites," here in Court, and that it was here that I first met some of the participants? It is of no import whatever. I am connected with the "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites," of course within the limits defined by the Criminal Code, by that complicity, both political and juridical, which follows from the fact that I belonged to this bloc. (1938 Trial, 758)

Skilled conspirators do not inform all members of the conspiratorial network about all the activities of other members. They compartmentalize their information. It was natural that Rakovsky would not have been told about everything the bloc was doing, all the more so since he disagreed with the tactic of "terror," an important aspect of the bloc's activities.

* Like former NKVD man Lerner, former NKVD man Aronson must have been interrogated specifically for Serov's report, four days before the report itself was dated (July 3 vs July 7, 1956). It is Aronson's testimony during this interrogation that was no doubt given "under pressure" and "in an atmosphere of serious violation of the norms of socialist legality."

This raises the question of the case file that Serov repeatedly cites: "Archival file No. 300956," either volume 7 or volume 9. Serov cites this file number nine times, always when "agent Dima," "agent Finn," or "cellmates" are quoted. All these supposed infor-

mants are themselves quoting alleged statements of Rakovsky's to them in 1940 or 1941 in Orlov prison.

Georgii Cherniavskii is a Russian Trotskyist researcher who has published many books and articles on Trotsky and Trotsky-related subjects from a fiercely partisan pro-Trotsky and anti-Stalin standpoint.[37] Cherniavskii was permitted to read Rakovsky's file from Orlov prison, where Rakovsky was confined. It contains letters from his wife, from one of which, dated March 26, 1940, he quotes some lines. Cherniavskii read Rakovsky's appeals to Kalinin, Beria, and Stalin asking that his case be reviewed. Cherniavskii says that there are a number of these. All of these appeals were made on grounds of health. All were denied. Serov confirms this:

> After the trial RAKOVSKY, citing his advanced age and illness, repeatedly made applications in which he petitioned for clemency. However, RAKOVSKY's requests remained unsatisfied. (837)

If Rakovsky had claimed he was innocent those documents would also be in his file. But none is. Evidently, therefore, Rakovsky never claimed he was innocent, only that he was elderly and unwell.

"Solitary Confinement"

In January 1941 Rakovsky asked Beria for transfer from Orlov prison to a camp. The reasons he gave for his request were: "lack of fresh air, light, unsatisfactory food, and solitary confinement – 'odinochnoe zakliuchenie.'" (Cherniavskii, 540)

According to Rakovsky's prison file he had no cellmates! No wonder none of the "agent" or "cellmate" reports that Serov quotes are in Rakovsky's prison file. Much other material is: scraps of ciga-

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[37] Georgii Cherniavskii, Mikhail Stanchev, Maria Tortika (Lobanova), *Zhiznennyi put' Khristiana Rakovskogo 1873-1941. Evropeizm I Bol'shevism: Neokonchennaia Duel'*. Moscow: Tsentropoligraf, 2014.

rette paper on which Rakovsky wrote what were evidently comments about politics, now unreadable (Cherniavskii, 541). Once more, Serov was lying.[38]

Serov claims that Rakovsky made the following threat:

> In this regard, on May 17, 1941 RAKOVSKY said to / agent "Finn" /: "I have decided to change my tactics. So far I have only asked for pardon, but have not written about my own case. Now I will write a statement calling for review of my case, with a description of all the 'secrets of the Madrid court' — Soviet investigation. At least let the people through whose hands all statements pass know how *dutye* [either "inflated," i.e. exaggerated, or "phony"] cases and trials are concocted out of personal political revenge. Even though I may soon die, even if I am a corpse, remember ... sometimes even corpses will begin to speak." (arch. case number 300956, v. 9, l.d. 239-240)

This is the one statement about Rakovsky in prison that has been previously published: in the journal *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* 1, 1989, p. 119. This journal was begun under Gorbachev and was the venue for many "revelations" and rehabilitations concerning the Stalin years. But there it is attributed not to "agent Finn" but to Aronson: "Delo [case file] Aronson, vol. 9, pp. 239-40."[39] According to Serov, it is with the other "agent" materials in "archival file (*arkh. delo*) 300956," pp. 239-40.

We do not know anything about this file. Serov never names the file from which he is quoting Aronson's statements of 1956. Were

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[38] Rakovsky must have had occasional contact with other prisoners and with the prison staff. A *tiuremnaia kharakteristicka* or note by prison authorities about Rakovsky's behavior from 1941 states: "The prisoner shows himself to be an embittered and irreconcilable enemy of Soviet authority. He systematically spreads counterrevolutionary slander." (540)

[39] Also in *Reabilitatsiia. Politicheskie Protsessy 30-50-x godov.* (M. Izd. Polit. Literatury, 1991), p. 240.

all the "agent materials" plus Aronson's testimony put into the same file? Perhaps Gorbachev's men did not really do any research of their own and just copied from Serov's report and, what's more, copied inaccurately. They had little incentive to copy correctly from these top-secret documents that no one else could see – if, indeed, this file exists at all.

Or are both sources correct and it was Aronson who was quoting "agent Finn" and, if so, no doubt "agent Dima" and Rakovsky's "cellmates" too? That would make the "agent" and "cellmate" accounts third-hand (Rakovsky to "agent/cellmate" – to Aronson – to Serov's researchers). In this scenario NKVD man Aronson was the person who "debriefed" Rakovsky's "agents/cellmates." But —as we now know— *Rakovsky had no cellmates*: he was in solitary confinement.

Cherniavskii reproduces this "Aronson-Finn" passage from *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989. Evidently Cherniavskii was unaware of Serov's July 7, 1956, report which had been published the year before his own book. It also suggests that Cherniavskii did not see case file 300956 or "Delo Aronson." But Cherniavskii was given access to Rakovsky's investigative file and the file on Rakovsky from Orlov prison. And this file would have provided him with all the testimony from "agent Dima," "agent Finn," and probably from Aronson himself. Had Cherniavskii asked for this file and been refused he would surely have said as much in his book.

Therefore, we can conclude that Rakovsky's investigation and Orlov prison files do not contain these "agent" and "cellmate" reports. That means that, if they exist at all, they were produced for Serov in 1956. Given Serov's proven dishonesty, plus the fact that Rakovsky was in solitary confinement, we cannot accept these supposed reports of Rakovsky's statements in prison as genuine. They are most likely yet more falsifications by Serov and his associates. Molotov would not have known this.

Serov continues:

RAKOVSKY's testimony about his alleged criminal activity is also refuted by the fact that the men he named in interrogations as his accomplices, GVAKHARIA, BABAYAN and SABANIN have now been rehabilitated and their cases closed. BOGOMOLOV, whom RAKOVSKY named as a member of a counterrevolutionary organization, pleaded not guilty at his trial. (837)

Even if these statements are true — as we have repeatedly shown, Serov cannot be trusted — rehabilitations are not evidence. Bogomolov's failure to confess would not mean he was innocent or that Rakovsky's testimony was false.

Serov claimed that Aronson testified about threats against Rakovsky:

> It should be noted that prisoners were prodded into self-incrimination and slander against others not only by direct physical violence but also by mental violence. Threats of repression against relatives, threats of beatings, cries of prisoners being beaten — the investigators used all these in order to obtain "confessions." Former investigator ARONSON testified about this:
>
> "I personally did not use physical force against RAKOVSKY, obviously, because he did not confess to me about espionage (RAKOVSKY "confessed" himself guilty of espionage to other investigators). I admit that I might have applied other means of pressure — measures of a mental nature: threats against him personally, threats to arrest members of his family. I seem to remember, in particular, that RAKOVSKY was informed about the arrest of his wife and that her fate depended upon his confessions. Such was the system of interrogation of prisoners, introduced as mandatory methods by the leadership of the NKVD of that time."

> As is evident from the report of agent "Dima" RAKOVSKY himself, in his cell at the Orlov prison, spoke about the situation of the investigation of his case as follows: "...when almost from the first day they make it clear that you have to lie about yourself and others, smear your own name and honor, then you are overcome with rage and indignation. You begin to fight, to resist, but then when they tell you, as ARON-SON told me: 'Old man, do not hold out, confess,' when they tell you that they will annihilate your family, that they will shoot you, you give up. **When I was told that my wife had been put into the Lefortovo, I screamed and grabbed my head — that meant she would die.** Fear for your family, the consciousness that you are sending them to their deaths, fear and the desire to live, complete hopelessness, and **then the party 'automatic,' the habit of obeying the party** — these things make you lie and do the devil knows what. All this is a lie, there is not a drop of truth in any of these cases." (arch. case number 300956, v. 9, l.d. 321)

This Aronson statement has to be a fabrication. Cherniavskii interviewed at least two relatives of Rakovsky's concerning this period. Neither said anything about an arrest of Rakovsky's wife who, as we have already seen, mailed letters and money to Rakovsky in Orlov prison.

Cherniavskii recounts the arrest of a niece of Rakovsky's who was a Bulgarian and had been staying with him. She was arrested shortly after Rakovsky while trying to return home and remained under arrest for some months – Cherniavskii does not say how long, but suggests that she was released in late 1937. The fact that this event was remembered and recorded in Rakovsky's family makes it all but certain that an arrest of Rakovsky's wife would also have been remembered – if it had occurred.

Moreover, it had been many years – if ever – since Rakovsky, a longtime oppositionist, had "automatically," i.e. reflexively, obeyed

"the Party." So the statement about "the party automatic" is a fabrication too. We noted above that Aronson had reason to fear if he did not make a confession along the lines Khrushchev and his men wanted.

Serov continued:

> Further, he [Rakovsky] also said:
>
> "I was taken from the Butyrki [prison] to the Lefortovo, and from the Lefortovo to the Lubyanka. Every night I expected to be shot. In Lefortovo, in this horrible prison where you could hear the screams of people under torture, the moaning of women, shots during times of execution and the constant noise of aircraft engines, they suddenly cut my fingernails – I realized that they wanted to torture me. Soon I was summoned at night. I appeared before NIKOLAEV, AGAS, and another type that does the torturing. When I walked in, I was told that I was a spy. 'Me, a spy?' 'Yes, you. And you yourself will tell us about your activities.' I realized that this was the end, that the only way to salvation was through admitting the most serious charges. This is the dialectic ... Everything went into it – the Japanese and the British. I myself sometimes became confused, I said so much."
> (ibid, l.d. 322)

Immediately after this Bessonov is quoted as saying the same thing.

Then we are told the following about Sokol'nikov, sentenced to prison rather than execution at the January 1937 Moscow Trial.

> From materials in the archives of the KGB we know that SOKOL'NIKOV was brought to Moscow from prison in the fall of 1937 to be used as a witness at the upcoming trial of BUKHARIN, RYKOV and others, but

> because of his refusal to testify at trial he was sent back. (853)

Apparently Serov did not realize that statements like these contradict the whole tenor of his report. If Rakovsky or anyone else made false confessions in the investigation and at trial because of threats against their families, why would they contradict their testimony just because they had been convicted and were in prison? There would be no less danger to their families after trial than before.

How then could others refuse to plead guilty, as Serov said they did? How could Sokol'nikov have refused to testify? How could Bukharin have spent half of his lengthy testimony, plus all of his closing statement, staunchly denying the Prosecutor's most serious accusations? Evidently they were not afraid of torture, threats to family, etc., when they did so.

There is not now, nor has there ever been, any evidence that any of the Moscow trials defendants were tortured. On the contrary: there is good evidence that they were not. Zinoviev stated in a pretrial letter that he was being well treated.[40] Even Steven Cohen, a world authority on Bukharin and staunchly anti-Stalin, concluded in 2003 that Bukharin was not tortured.[41]

In 1956 Anastas Mikoian told American writer Louis Fischer that "Bukharin and the other Moscow trial defendants were not tortured."[42] Mikoian had no reason to lie about this. He claimed to believe that they were innocent, was a staunch Khrushchev man, and supported Khrushchev's attempt to "rehabilitate" them as "victims of Stalin."

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[40] R-PP 184; originally published in *Izvestiia* TsK KPSS 8 (1989), 89-90.

[41] Koen, Stiven (Cohen), "Bukharin na Lubianke." *Svobodnaia Mysl'* 22 (3), 2003, 58-63, at pp. 60-61.

[42] Louis Fischer. *Russia Revisited. A New Look at Russia and Her Satellites.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1957, p. 70.

We have the texts of the appeals of all the defendants who received death sentences, plus that of Dr. Pletnev. In every case the defendants reiterated their guilt. Bukharin wrote two such appeals. He stated that he "deserved to be shot ten times over."[43]

How likely is it that the men who were sentenced to death reiterated their guilt, often in the strongest possible terms, and yet were innocent? Not "to protect their families" – Iagoda and, especially, Bukharin spent a lot of their testimony vigorously denying some of Prosecutor Vyshinskii's accusations against them. If there were ever a time to claim innocence it would have been in these appeals, which were never supposed to be made public. Moreover, if one surmises that they continued to insist upon their own guilt "in order to save their families," then why would the three who did not received death sentences – Bessonov, Rakovsky, and Pletnev – not also continue to insist upon their own guilt for the same reason?

One more point in the lurid account above must be a falsification: "Every night I expected to be shot." There would have been no reason for Rakovsky to have "expected" that he might be shot without an investigation and trial. In all the cases we know about and that Rakovsky would have known about, arrested persons were imprisoned during investigation according to the Soviet (and, incidentally, the European) practice and then given a trial.

Serov, however, had every reason to depict all aspects of the investigation and trial of the 1938 Moscow trial defendants as outrageously improper. We have proven that he lied in many other instances in this report. This alleged statement by Rakovsky appears to be another of Serov's fabrications.

According to Cherniavskii, Rakovsky was given a copy of the indictment against him on April 9, 1937,

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[43] Bukharin's appeals were first published in *Izvestiia* September 2, 1993, p. 2. I have put a translation on line at
https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/bukharinappeals.html

> ...in which it is asserted that against Rakovsky "there is sufficient evidence that he is a member in a counter-revolutionary Trotskyist organization." (499)

Thereafter Rakovsky was interrogated numerous times. This means that a normal judicial procedure was being followed. We'll look at Cherniavskii's account of them below.

More alleged testimony from Rakovsky's "cellmates":

> The "processing" of prisoners in the case of the Right-Trotskyite center did not stop day or night. This was handled during the interrogations by the investigators and in the cells by specially placed people. Concerning one of these people RAKOVSKY, after his conviction, told his fellow inmates:
>
> > In Lefortovo they put Lieberman into my cell ... They let me write my confessions in my cell. When I presented them, if they did not like them, they / 853 / would tear them up and throw them in my face. When I consulted with Lieberman my confessions always satisfied the investigators. He served as the transfer authority, he dictated to me what they wanted and through him I asked their advice ...
> >
> > In the end, I did not care, because I lied. And he could not hurt me, on the contrary, he facilitated my work. (arch. case number 300956, v. 9, l.d. 324) (852-3)

Here Serov does not even bother to name the purported "fellow inmates" of Rakovsky's who supposedly heard Rakovsky say this.

Serov recounts some other stories about Rakovsky that do not speak directly to the question of guilt or innocence. The story below is evidently an attempt to account for Krestinskii's decision, between the first and second days of the March 1938 trial, to change his plea from innocent to guilty.

Concerning the circumstances surrounding KRESTINSKII'S confessions at the trial, former employee of the NKVD ARONSON has testified:

"I, like many other NKVD men, attended the trial. At the first session KRESTINSKII retracted the confessions he had given earlier and pleaded not guilty. This statement caused confusion on the part of VYSHINSKII, who was in charge of the trial.

/ 855 /

"During the break we investigators discussed what had happened and talked about how to get out of this situation. NIKOLAEV (he was in charge of RAKOVSKY's case) then said that he would try to resolve the incident. When the accused were taken from the court they took KRESTINSKII together with RAKOVSKY. The next day KRESTINSKII pleaded guilty and confirmed all the confessions that he had given previously. **I think**, and the investigators said the same thing at the time, that KRESTINSKII had not been beaten, but RAKOVSKY had persuaded him. **They said** that RAKOVSKY, who in general had great influence on KRESTINSKII, told him something like this: 'You ought to admit guilt, all the defendants are pleading guilty, and the court will consider anyone who does not admit guilt as an unrepentant enemy and will unquestionably shoot him, while in return for the admission of guilt they will preserve your life. The family of him who confessed guilt will not suffer, but in case of rejection of guilt the family will also be repressed.' This so affected KRESTINSKII that to the end of the trial he did not try any more to reject the confessions he had given during the investigation."

Also characteristic in this regard is the behavior at trial of the public prosecutor VYSHINSKII. When the court summoned KRESTINSKII for questioning VY-

> SHINSKII did not permit his immediate interrogation and first asked a number of questions precisely to RAKOVSKY.
>
> KRESTINSKII was interrogated only after RAKOVSKY had given him an example — he fully admitted his guilt and named KRESTINSKII as his accomplice. (854-5. Underlined emphasis in the original.)

Even if this were true – and even Serov only claims that it was Aronson's speculation – the fact that Rakovsky convinced Krestinskii to reaffirm his initial confessions and "set an example" does not say anything about Krestinskii's or Rakovsky's guilt or innocence.

Another alleged statement by Rakovsky is given with no specific source and to no discernable purpose:

> During the trial the investigators never left me, encouraged me, talked about the impression that this revolting farce was making on me. (Arch. case number 300956, v. 7, l.d. 325) (856)

The final passage in Serov's report concerning Rakovsky is the following:

> After his conviction RAKOVSKY **told his cellmates**: "I coordinated the main points of my speech at the trial, my last words with the investigators... During this last period they were all at my service, right up to the olives [sic]." (arch. case number 300956, v. 7, l.d. 325)
>
> This story of RAKOVSKY's is fully confirmed in archival documents of the NKVD. Moreover, they show that this situation occurred not only in relation to RAKOVSKY but also in relation to other defendants in the present case.
>
> So, in archival files on RAKOVSKY and GRIN'KO we have found typewritten outlines of their future confessions at trial. By comparing these outlines with the confessions that RAKOVSKY and GRIN'KO gave at trial

it was revealed that they are identical both structurally and in their meaning, and that some phrases in them are repeated almost word for word in the trial transcript.

Moreover, in these archival materials we have also discovered drafts of the "last words" of the accused RAKOVSKY, RYKOV and GRIN'KO, and in the materials on RAKOVSKY even two versions of "his" last words at the trial have turned up. (857)

We know the first paragraph is a lie because we know that Rakovsky had no cellmates. The other claims, even if true, do not speak to guilt or innocence. Even if genuine this paragraph can only refer to Rakovsky's longer statements, perhaps the opening and closing statements.

No prosecution anywhere would go to any serious trial, let alone a public trial, without a fairly precise idea of what the defendants will say. However, during the trial Rakovsky challenged Vyshinskii on several points. Much of his testimony was in the form of short question and answer passages. These could not have been written down for practice in advance.

Serov and the Bloc

Throughout his report Serov appears to claim that the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites itself was a Stalin-NKVD invention and never really existed.

* Serov normally puts the words "anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" in scare quotes. This is evidently a signal that he is attesting to the nonexistence of the bloc.

* He refers several times to "a so-called 'Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites.'" (833; 836; 849)

* He quotes several defendants as supposedly stating that the whole trial was "a complete invention of the NKVD" (Bessonov 838; Kamkov, 840-1)

Serov's most unambiguous claim that no bloc existed is found at the very end of the Report:

> ... the accusation against them that in the following years they created a bloc of Rights and Trotskyites and conducted organized anti-Soviet activities, is falsified and in this regard they are subject to rehabilitation. (858)

After the 22nd Party Congress of October 1961 during which Khrushchev and his men attacked Stalin even more ferociously than he had done at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 there was a more extensive attempt to clear the 1938 Moscow trial defendants. The "Shvernik Commission" issued two reports, the "Zapiska" or "memorandum" and the "Spravka" or "inquiry." In the longer "Zapiska" written in 1962 or early 1963 and available to Gorbachev's aides but not published until the mid-1990s Khrushchev's aides concluded:

> No "Anti-Soviet Right-Trotskyist Bloc" in reality ever existed, and those who were convicted in this case were not really guilty of counterrevolutionary activity.[44]

Gorbachev's men adopted the same conclusion. This is interesting because Gorbachev's men made this statement *after* Pierre Broué's discovery that a bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, including Zinovievites and other oppositionists, had indeed existed.

In 1986 American scholar J. Arch Getty published an article in the journal *Soviet Studies* in which he discusses, among other things, Broué's discovery of the bloc. Getty's article was published in Russian translation in one of the last issues of the Soviet Communist Party journal *Problems in the history of the CPSU*. In a special afterword Boris Starkov, an official CPSU historian, tried to explain

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[44] *Reabilitatsiia. Kak Eto Bylo. Fevral' 1956 – nachalo 80-kh godov. T. 2.* Moskva: "Materik", 2003. (RKEB 2), p. 630.

away the significance of this embarrassing discovery. For it certainly proved that Khrushchev's and Gorbachev's aides had been lying – and this while the USSR and the CPSU were still in existence.[45]

There was, and remains, an immense amount of evidence in Soviet archives that this bloc really existed. Broué's discovery of documents by Trotsky and his son Sedov verified this Soviet documentation. So Serov was lying here too.

Cherniavskii's discoveries

The Khrushchev and Gorbachev attempts to find evidence that the defendants in the 1938 Moscow trial were innocent have suffered total defeat. It is worth considering what this means.

The Soviets had access to everything, including vast amounts of documentary evidence that is unavailable to researchers today. They found no exculpatory evidence and so were obliged to falsify the results of their studies.

An objective, materialist approach to historical investigation demands that we draw the only conclusion permissible. The defendants in the Moscow trials – specifically, for our present purposes, the 1938 Moscow trial – were guilty. All the evidence points towards their guilt. Monumental efforts by those with strong motives to prove the opposite and all the resources at their command have failed. Truly objective students will have no problem with this conclusion. The only people who will reject it are those with powerful preconceived ideas.

We do not know all the evidence that the prosecution had against Rakovsky. Khrushchev-era, Gorbachev-era, and post-Soviet Russian leaders had and have no incentive to release this information because of the threat it poses to their anticommunist and anti-

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[45] Dzh. Arch Getti (Getty), "Trotskii v Izgnanii: Osnovanie IV Internatsionala." *Voprosy Istorii KPSS* 5 (1991), 72-83.

Stalin historical paradigm. However, we now have more evidence about Rakovsky than we did a few years ago. The curtain of secrecy surrounding this evidence was lifted just a crack for Georgii Cherniavskii and his coauthors who in 2014 published a biography of Rakovsky.

Cherniavskii was permitted to read Rakovsky's NKVD file as well as his file from Orlov prison. He disclosed some of what he read in his recent biography of Rakovsky. But Cherniavskii chose not to act with the objectivity of an ethical scholar. He was already convinced that Rakovsky had been innocent. Rakovsky's interrogations do not support this conclusion, so Cherniavskii did not reproduce any of them.

All Cherniavskii gives us are a few quotations from these confessions and letters. Nevertheless, some of these quotations are of considerable interest.

Though he was arrested on January 27, 1937, Rakovsky only began to confess on June 1, 1937, when he wrote a statement addressed to Ezhov. In it he wrote:

> After four months of obstinate silence at the investigation I have concluded that the only correct thing to do is a fundamental change of my position. In beginning to give full and sincere confessions I wish to declare that I remained a Trotskyist until the present and have been connected with the Trotskyist underground. I promise to be sincere and truthful to the end and consider that my confessions about the counterrevolutionary work of the Trotskyist underground will help the Party and the state apparatus to root out the Trotskyist underground. (500-501)

The first interrogation transcript in Rakovsky's file is dated June 8, 1937. Cherniavskii writes:

> "Having admitted" in it his adherence to "counterrevolutionary Trotskyism" Rakovsky at the same time dis-

sociates himself from any accusation of terrorist activity.

> I personally did not believe in terrorist activity and have not carried out any work along those lines.

Rakovsky does not claim that he was unaware of terrorist activity by the Trotskyist underground, only that he did not believe in or participate in such activity. We know that such activity did exist.

On June 29 Rakovsky admitted that he "shared the terrorist assumptions of the underground Trotskyist organization." He also said "I have recounted everything in my confessions and have nothing else to say."

During the next two months "Rakovsky wrote lengthy 'confessions' under the title 'My underground c-r [counterrevolutionary] work during my exile'" between 1928 and 1934. In this document Rakovsky cited the names of many persons but Cherniavskii does not mention any of them.

> He claimed that after Trotsky's exile and the capitulation of a number of other oppositionists he became the primary theoretician of the opposition, conducted a large amount of analytical work....
>
> But finally he arrived at the conclusion that the general line of the Party had led to a crisis that was becoming a catastrophe, that a return to the "pre-NEP period" was unavoidable – that is, a rejection of market relationships and a return to extraordinary measures. Rakovsky concluded that a coup had taken place in the country, that
>
> > a complete transformation had taken place in the proletarian dictatorship and in the ideological structure of the Party itself; that, while remaining socialist at its base, insofar as the land and other implements and means of production remained

> socialized, the proletarian dictatorship had been transformed into a stratified society. The bureaucracy [*sluzhebnoe soslovie*] had replaced the proletariat and the working masses.

...

In the document now under consideration Rakovsky names two more important political works of that period [viz of his exile]: "Back to the socialist constitution, back to the Party program", and "Memoir of a Bolshevik-Leninist."

In his "confessions" Rakovsky recounted his work on his memoirs:

> I collected an enormous amount of historical materials both on the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia and the Western workers' movement, of which I was a member, and on the national rebirth of the Balkan countries, and began to gradually write my memoirs, in which both the persons and the events of the history of the revolutionary working class movement of a number of countries, including Russia, were to be depicted.

Rakovsky, Trotsky, and the Japanese

Between June and August 1937 Rakovsky's testimony evidently concerned only his activities up to 1937. But on September 4, 1937, Rakovsky's statements began to change dramatically. On that day Rakovsky wrote the following:

> At a time when the Soviet homeland could be facing international complications of every kind I consider it doubly my duty, both as a former member of the communist party and as a citizen of a socialist fatherland to relate honestly, fully and wholly everything that I did. (Cherniavskii 503)

According to Cherniavskii Rakovsky's confessions followed on September 8, 9, 10, 14, 16 and 17, and October 9, 10, and 12.

Rakovsky confessed that he had been recruited to Japanese intelligence by Prince Iyesato Tokugawa, chairman of the Japanese Red Cross between 1928 and 1938 and Chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent from 1934 to 1938. Tokugawa's name was not mentioned at trial. But it is in the draft of Vyshinskii's opening remarks which is published in the 2013 edition of the original transcript of the March 1938 Moscow trial, the same edition that contains Serov's report and the appeals of those defendants who were sentenced to death. (30)

On September 22, 1937, a face-to-face confrontation was held between Rakovsky and Konstantin IUrenev, former Soviet ambassador to Japan. IUrenev was not arrested until September 23, 1937. The near coincidence of dates suggests that the Soviet investigation did not know of IUrenev's involvement in the Trotskyist conspiracy until Rakovsky disclosed it. IUrenev said that did not recognize Rakovsky; evidently, as the following suggests, he had grown haggard and unkempt in prison. Cherniavskii quotes Rakovsky's reply:

> You did not recognize me. The prison regimen is such as the diet is moderate and does not allow one to maintain one's weight. This affected my illness negatively, but later they began to give me certain privileges in nourishment. But that is not why I have confessed... At last I understood **that it was necessary to unmask myself [*razoblachit' sebia*] in order to unmask Trotsky and to give the Party the chance to strengthen its rear both against those who are striving for internal restoration and against external aggression.** (504)

According to Cherniavskii, during one interrogation Rakovsky stated that Karl Radek had told him about Piatakov's secret flight to Oslo at the end of 1935 and meeting with Trotsky. (505) In a statement he made to Ezhov dated December 19-20, 1936,

Piatakov stated that during his secret visit to Trotsky in Norway in 1935 Trotsky had told him to get in touch with Rakovsky by all means and tell him to work more actively. Piatakov said that he intended to meet with Rakovsky and transmit Trotsky's instructions, but was not able to do so.[46]

Rakovsky also stated that after he had been recruited by Prince Tokugawa his recruitment was confirmed by Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Koki Hirota (Foreign Minister September 1933 – April 1936) and then by Japanese Prime Minister Keisuke Okada (Prime Minister July 1934 to March 1936). (506) These names are also mentioned in the note of Gorbachev's Politburo Commission investigating the murder of Kirov, in their response to Iakovlev dated June 14, 1990.[47]

Convinced beforehand that Rakovsky and, for that matter, all defendants at all the Moscow trials were innocent, Cherniavskii considers it absurd that these high-ranking Japanese figures would have met with Rakovsky because such people do not meet with "spies." (506) Here Cherniavskii is grasping at a straw, for Rakovsky was no ordinary "spy." He was an agent who had once been a significant figure in the Bolshevik Party and who was closer to Trotsky than anyone else.

Rakovsky's Recruitment by the Japanese

Cherniavskii's account suggests that Rakovsky volunteered these names and the statement that he had agreed to work for Japanese intelligence to the extent of being Trotsky's representative. No one else knew about these activities. If Rakovsky had not volunteered these confessions and names they would not have figured in the charges against him or at the trial at all.

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[46] See *Lubianka* 1937-1938, Document No. 11, pp. 56-60; also at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/60982

[47] RKEB 3, p. 487; also at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/68180

At sentencing Rakovsky was spared the death penalty on the grounds of "not having taken a direct part in the organization of terrorist, diversive, and wrecking activities." (1938 Trial, 800) Rakovsky was not convicted of espionage for British and Japanese intelligence. Espionage was mentioned only in the preamble, not in the sentence itself.

Cherniavskii read Rakovsky's confessions. Unfortunately for us he chose not to reproduce them. But Cherniavskii would certainly have told us of any sign that the NKVD investigators had invented the accusation that Rakovsky had become a Japanese spy and forced Rakovsky to confess to it. Cherniavskii says nothing of the sort.

In fact Cherniavskii thinks that Rakovsky himself invented the charge of Japanese espionage in order to make the trial look ridiculous. *This means that according to Cherniavskii, the NKVD did not force Rakovsky to confess to espionage for Japan but that Rakovsky volunteered this information on his own.*

Trotsky's Collaboration with the Japanese

However, there was one person who did confirm Rakovsky's spying for Japan – Trotsky himself. On February 27, 1937, just one month after Rakovsky's arrest, months before Rakovsky confessed to spying for Japan, Trotsky "predicted" that Rakovsky would do precisely that.

We recall that on February 27, 1937, Trotsky wrote:

> **It is quite certain** that in the next trial, with Rakovsky participating as the accused, there will be charges of conspiratorial dealings between Rakovsky and **the Japanese diplomats and military** (under orders from Trotsky, of course).

And again on April 15, 1937, Trotsky wrote:

> Now, I ask myself if it did not have a second purpose, to frame him afterwards – that he was connected with

> **the Japanese military chiefs in the Government**, and so forth.

Trotsky "predicted" that Rakovsky would confess, not to contact with agents of Japanese intelligence, but to direct contact with persons of the highest rank, with "diplomats" and "Japanese military chiefs in the Government."

And sure enough, Rakovsky said he had met with Koki Hirota and Keisuke Okada. Hirota was Japanese minister of foreign affairs. Okada was Prime Minister of Japan and also an admiral in the Imperial Japanese navy. These men perfectly fit Trotsky's description of "Japanese diplomats and military," "Japanese military chiefs in the Government."

A few defendants in the first two Moscow trials had also confessed to espionage for foreign powers. But not one of them said that he had been in contact with any persons of high rank. Only "Gestapo" agents, German professors, persons whom no one had heard of, had been mentioned.

Trotsky did not write "Rakovsky *may* be charged with collaboration with the Japanese (under orders from Trotsky, of course)." He did not write "*Perhaps* this time a defendant will be forced to admit to contact with high-ranking persons (under orders...)." Trotsky said that "*It is quite certain that ... between Rakovsky and the Japanese diplomats and military.*" Six weeks later Trotsky was even more precise: "*with the Japanese military chiefs in the Government.*"

How could Trotsky have been both so *precise* about whom Rakovsky would admit to meeting with, and at the same time so *completely accurate*? There is only one hypothesis that offers an answer to this question and that is consistent with Trotsky's stated practice to "expose the scheme in advance": *Trotsky knew that Rakovsky had done these things.*

Moreover, we also know how Trotsky knew what Rakovsky would testify: Rakovsky himself had informed him. In his trial testimony Rakovsky stated:

> **I wrote to Trotsky about all this—about my negotiations in Tokyo**, about my conversations with Yurenev, about my meetings, and, of course, about this last proposition. (1938 Trial, 294)

How did Rakovsky manage to write Trotsky from within the Soviet Union? According to the testimony of two defendants Rakovsky had a way of contacting Trotsky that was special to himself. We have already seen that, according to Ezhov's letter to Stalin of January 27, 1937, Piatakov testified:

> Concerning RAKOVSKY TROTSKY said that it was essential to talk with him and give him a push in his work along the lines of the Trotskyist organization. From this I deduced that RAKOVSKY had some personal line of contact with TROTSKY. (Lubianka 1937-1938, Doc. No. 11)

We recall that Serov denied Piatakov had really said this in his testimony. What's more, in the same report Ezhov reported to Stalin that another Trotskyist, Pavel Mill' (Okun') also knew of this:

> According to confessions of PIATAKOV and MILL' (Okun') he had an independent line of contact with TROTSKY (and has effected this contact through ROSMER).[48]

Serov remained silent about the fact that Mill' (Okun') confirmed Rakovsky's "independent line of contact with Trotsky." In the early 1930s Mill' (Okun') had worked with the International Secretariat of Trotsky's movement in Paris and so could have been privy to this information.

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[48] According to a note in volume 5 of the series *Arkhiv Trotskogo* edited by IUrii G. Fel'shtinskii and Cherniavskii, Mill' was a pseudonym of Pavel Okun', a Soviet émigré and adherent of Trotsky's in Paris. He returned to the USSR in 1932. There are a number of letters from Trotsky to Okun' in the Trotsky Archive. See http://www.lib.ru/TROCKIJ/Arhiv_Trotskogo__t5.txt and note 504.

Given all the evidence we now have, the best explanation both for Rakovsky's confession that he agreed to work for Japanese intelligence, and for Trotsky's uncannily specific and accurate "prediction" that Rakovsky would admit this, is that it was true. Trotsky knew about these contacts from the Japanese, or from Rakovsky himself, or from both

The Alternative Hypothesis

A tenet of good historiography is to "respect and welcome divergent points of view."[49] Though few anticommunist historians do so, and Cherniavskii certainly does not, it is an essential practice for anyone interested in discovering the truth. That means we are obligated to consider other possible hypotheses that might account for the evidence we have outlined here.

In the present case, the only alternative hypothesis we can think of would be that the NKVD read Trotsky's remarks of February 27 and April 15, 1937, and, inspired by them, coerced Rakovsky to make a false confession that he had done exactly what Trotsky had said – that he had been recruited by "Japanese diplomats and military," "Japanese military chiefs in the Government." We need to examine this hypothesis to determine whether there is any evidence to sustain it.

In addition to Rakovsky's testimony at the March 1938 Moscow trial there are two independent sources for the story of Rakovsky's recruitment. The first is a letter from a Gorbachev-era Politburo commission to Aleksandr Iakovlev, one of Gorbachev's closest advisers and the leading ideological anti-Stalinist in his circle. Iakovlev had asked that researchers be tasked to gather evidence to support his hypothesis that Stalin had been responsible for having Sergei Kirov murdered on December 1, 1934. The research team had reported that there was no evidence to support this hypothe-

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[49] American Historical Association. *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct.* Washington, DC, 2011, 6.

sis. (RKEB 3, 202 ff.) To this Iakovlev reacted with a lengthy communication in which he asked them to look again. (RKEB 3, 325 ff.) The result was an even longer and very detailed response of over 23,000 words that occupies 48 closely-spaced pages in its 2004 publication. (RKEB 3, 459 ff.) In it the Politburo researchers demonstrate in detail to their high-ranking boss that there is simply no evidence to tie Stalin to Kirov's murder.

In the course of examining all the evidence related to the Moscow trials the commission members touched upon the March 9, 1938, closed session of the third Moscow trial. Here certain of the defendants identified the citizens of foreign countries who had recruited them for espionage. This session is mentioned in the trial transcript but is not recorded in it. Nor is it reproduced in the 2013 edition of the uncorrected transcript of the 1938 trial.

Here is what the Politburo commission said about this session, as regards Rakovsky's testimony at it:

> At the closed court session of the Military collegium of the Supreme court of the USSR that took place on March 9, 1938, state prosecutor Vyshinsky questioned the participants of the so-called "Anti-Soviet Right-Trotskyist Bloc" about their espionage work for foreign states.
>
> Rozengol'ts stated that he had been recruited by German ambassadors Dirksen and Schulenburg and confirmed his ties to German intelligence. Rakovsky confessed that when he was in Tokyo he had been recruited for espionage work for Japan by the Chairman of the Japanese delegation of the Red Cross, the Japanese prince Tokugawa, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hiroto, and also by the Prime-Minister of Japan admiral Okada. In addition Rakovsky confessed at this session about his ties with English intelligence to which he had been recruited by "Foreign Office" employees Lockhart and Armstrong with the knowledge

> of the Permanent Secretary of the English Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Sir William Tyrrell."[50]
>
> After this Vyshinsky questioned Bukharin concerning his attempt to overthrow Soviet power in 1918 with Lockhart's help, which the latter [Bukharin] categorically denied.[51]

The Politburo commission had all the Soviet archives at its disposal. There is no indication that Rakovsky was forced to name these names or that they were even suggested to him during the investigation. As we have already seen, Cherniavskii concluded that Rakovsky had volunteered this information of his own accord.

Cherniavskii is determined to defend his preconceived ideas that Rakovsky was innocent. Since he has no evidence at all to support this notion, he is forced to "channel" Rakovsky! Cherniavskii tries to explain Rakovsky's confessions to espionage for Japan and the persons Rakovsky named as part of a supposed "plan" to make statements so "absurd"[52] that he himself and other supposedly "innocent victims" would be "rehabilitated" at some future time:

> His main aim was to facilitate the future rehabilitation of innocent victims and, naturally, his own rehabilitation in the first place. (505)

Cherniavskii suggests an alternative explanation for Rakovsky's confessions:

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[50] "Lockhart" must mean Robert Bruce Lockhart, the famous British intelligence agent. Sir William Tyrrell was Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs between 1925 and 1928. The Russian text reads Тирре – "Tireh," no doubt a stenographer's error.

[51] RKEB 3, 487. It appears that the Politburo Commission simply reproduced the summary of the Closed Session from the published version of the Russian-language trial transcript of 1938. Evidently they did not bother to obtain the original transcript of the Closed Session. Or perhaps this summary is the only record remaining.

[52] Scare quotes around the words "plan" and "absurd" represent Cherniavskii's subjective comments, not any demonstrable intent of Rakovsky's.

> An educated person who was fascinated by history and knew it well, Rakovsky must have remembered different episodes from various epochs when deliberately false confessions during investigations and trials had been given especially in order to undermine the whole accusation. (505-6)

Straining to find at least one example of such "different episodes" Cherniavskii cites a book about Joan of Arc published in 1991 in which the author suggests that one of Joan's prosecutors *may* have acted in this way. It is highly unlikely that Rakovsky would have been aware of this notion. It is also clear that Cherniavskii could not think of any other examples.

Cherniavskii read Rakovsky's investigation file. Gorbachev's Politburo commission read everything. Serov and his colleagues, who also had total access, tried hard to show that Rakovsky was framed but were unable to do so. Serov was forced to invent "agents" who were Rakovsky's "cellmates." Thanks to Cherniavskii we know that Rakovsky did not have any cellmates. We have demonstrated that Serov had to falsify a great deal of other material as well.

To sustain the alternative hypothesis that the NKVD read Trotsky's "predictions" of February 27 and April 15, 1937, and then forced Rakovsky to make false confessions conforming to what Trotsky had "predicted," one would need evidence that the NKVD did so. But all the evidence we now have is from:

* Serov's report of July 7, 1956,

* the Gorbachev-era Politburo commission,

* the Gorbachev-era Rehabilitation report of the Soviet Supreme Court,

* Rakovsky's own investigation file as described by Cherniavskii,

* Rakovsky's statements in the public part of the March 1938 trial,

* and the text of the secret session of March 9, 1938.

All this evidence is consistent only with the hypothesis that Rakovsky volunteered his testimony. There is no indication here that Rakovsky was compelled in any way to confess his ties to the Japanese.

Rakovsky's words give the appearance of a person striving to be truthful. At one point he rejects an accusation by Vyshinsky:

> VYSHINSKY: I want to put the question bluntly: I have a grave suspicion that your signature on the letter which Armstrong presented to you, a letter addressed to the German intelligence service, was not forged but was actually signed by you, because you were then already an agent of the German intelligence service. Is this right or wrong?
>
> RAKOVSKY: Absolutely wrong. (1938 Trial, 302-303)

Rakovsky also stated outright that he made his confession voluntarily and why he did so.

> RAKOVSKY: I must say that I have pleaded guilty to this from the moment when I decided to give complete, exhaustive and frank testimony. **For eight months I denied everything and refused to testify.**
>
> VYSHINSKY: Following the instructions and tactics of the Trotskyites?
>
> RAKOVSKY: I will tell you what prompted me ...
>
> VYSHINSKY: I have no objection if you will deal briefly with this, without long historical digressions. No objections, on my part.
>
> RAKOVSKY: Very briefly. **As I said, it was only in the eighth month that I began to make a clean breast of my main activities.**

VYSHINSKY: Criminal activities.

RAKOVSKY: My criminal activities, of course. But before this the thought frequently arose in my mind: was I doing right in denying? Nobody will deny that imprisonment, solitude in general, makes people undertake a revaluation of values. But I remember, and will never forget as long as I live, the circumstances which finally impelled me to give evidence. During one of the examinations, this was in the summer, I learnt, in the first place, that Japanese aggression had begun against China, against the Chinese people, I learnt of Germany's and Italy's undisguised aggression against the Spanish people....

I learnt of the feverish preparations which all the fascist states were making to unleash a world war. What a reader usually absorbs every day in small doses in telegrams, I received at once in a big dose. This had a stunning effect on me. All my past rose before me. Of course this past may be reduced to naught and will be obliterated by my disgraceful actions, but as an inner motive, nothing and nobody can do anything against it. All my past rose before me, my responsibilities, and it became clear to me that I myself was a party to this, that I was responsible, that I myself had helped the aggressors with my treasonable activities. I knew that I was not alone, that I was harbouring illusions about them. Former heads of the government, former People's Commissars, former Assistant People's Commissars, former Ambassadors had become entangled in this web. And then I became a judge over myself, I sat in judgment over myself. This is a court which no one will reproach with being biased. I sat in judgment over myself. I had given myself to the labour movement from my youth, and where had I got to? I had reached a stage when I facilitated the vilest work with my actions, I had facilitated the fascist aggressors' prepara-

> tions to destroy culture, civilization, all the achievements of democracy, all the achievements of the working class.
>
> That is what induced me to speak, that is what overcame my obstinacy, my false shame born of vanity, fear for my own fate, which was not worthy of a man who had once taken part in the revolutionary movement. My rancour, which all of us harboured, some to a greater and some to a lesser extent, rancour against the leadership, rancour against particular individuals, had played a great part. Rancour and ambition fell from me. **I considered that from now on my duty was to help in this struggle against the aggressor, that I would go and expose myself fully and entirely, and I told the investigator that on the following day I would begin to give complete, exhaustive testimony**. I must say that the testimony which I gave here is absolutely complete, sincere and exhaustive.

Here Rakovsky states that "it was only in the eighth month that I began to make a clean breast of my main activities." This corresponds exactly with what Cherniavskii found in reading Rakovsky's investigation file. Rakovsky had already made some admissions about much earlier activity. But Cherniavskii states:

> **Only after almost seven and a half months** from the time of his arrest did the prisoner again agree to make his confessions. (503)

Cherniavskii also outlines the reasons Rakovsky gave for finally revealing his Trotskyist activities on September 4, 1937.

> On September 4 [1937] ... Rakovsky again wrote a statement to Ezhov, again permeated by "ambivalence" and internal contradictoriness, calculated so that his confessions could easily be considered false: **"At a time when the Soviet homeland may face all**

> **kinds of international complications, I consider it to be doubly my duty both as a former member of the Communist Party and as a citizen of the socialist fatherland to relate frankly, fully, and completely everything that I have done."** (503)

This quotation from Rakovsky's pretrial confession of September 4, 1937, recorded by Cherniavskii, is in complete accord with the following passage from Rakovsky's trial transcript:

> **I considered that from now on my duty was to help in this struggle against the aggressor, that I would go and expose myself fully and entirely, and I told the investigator that on the following day I would begin to give complete, exhaustive testimony.** (1938 Trial, 314)

Convinced from the outset that Rakovsky and all other defendants were innocent and intolerant of all evidence to the contrary, Cherniavskii himself claims, without any evidence whatever, that Rakovsky was "broken" and wanted his confessions to be recognized as false by some future reader.

Here as elsewhere Cherniavskii has no evidence whatever for such claims, which serve only to demonstrate his own utter lack of objectivity. But Cherniavskii does make it clear that *Rakovsky was not forced to confess by any maltreatment by the NKVD or by being exposed by other prisoners' testimony.*

Hypotheses and Evidence

We have investigated two hypotheses to account for the evidence that Trotsky conspired with the Japanese. The first hypothesis is that Trotsky did indeed so conspire. This hypothesis accounts for all the evidence we have: Trotsky's very precise "predictions" on February 27 and April 15, 1937 that Rakovsky would be accused of conspiring on his – Trotsky's – behalf with Japanese diplomats and military men in the government; and Rakovsky's confession that he did indeed so conspire.

The alternative hypothesis is that the NKVD read Trotsky's "predictions" and, inspired by them, coerced Rakovsky to make confessions that conformed to Trotsky's statements. All the evidence in our possession refutes this hypothesis.

* In his statements Rakovsky named three prominent Japanese figures, including two in the government. But these names were not used during the trial. We only learned of them in 2004. So it is unlikely that the NKVD provided them.

* Because it is so clear that Rakovsky made his confession statements by himself, rather than prompted by anyone else, Cherniavskii was forced to suppose that they are "absurd" and so do not need to be taken seriously. In reality there is nothing objectively "absurd" about Rakovsky's confessions. This is Cherniavskii's stance whenever he is faced with evidence that contradicts his preconceived idea that Rakovsky was innocent. It is the logical fallacy known as the "argument from incredulity."[53]

But it is also clear that Cherniavskii believes Rakovsky volunteered these statements, chose what to say and whom to name. *This means that, in February and April 1937, Trotsky could only have known about Rakovsky's contact with "Japanese diplomats and military," "Japanese military chiefs in the Government," from Rakovsky himself.*

* Serov and Khrushchev's aides, and then Gorbachev's aides, were unable to find any evidence that Rakovsky was forced to confess. Serov constructed some fabrications about Rakovsky, since he had to present a report to Molotov and others who were unsympathetic to Khrushchev's idea that all the defendants in all the Moscow trials were innocent. Writing to Aleksandr Iakovlev, a person who wanted very badly to prove that Stalin had framed everybody, Gorbachev's aides were unable to cite any evidence that Rakovsky

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[53] See, for example, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argument_from_ignorance#Argument_from_incredulity.2FLack_of_imagination

was innocent. Gorbachev's aides did not even bother to cite any of the purported statements by Rakovsky's supposed "cellmates" cited by Serov. This in itself is further reason to think that these statements are phony.

Both Serov and Gorbachev's aides had complete access to everything in the Soviet archives, including much material that is still top secret. We can assume that nothing in those still-secret archives suggests that Rakovsky was framed.

* Gorbachev's Soviet Supreme Court was tasked with "rehabilitating" the remaining defendants of the third Moscow trial, including Rakovsky. But it lacked any evidence on which to base its conclusion that the defendants had been wrongfully convicted. In its Rehabilitation report of February 4, 1988, still top-secret in Russia, the Soviet Supreme Court dishonestly cited Frinovskii's confession statement of April 11, 1939, which remained secret until 2006. As we have seen, Frinovskii's confession statement *affirms* the guilt of the defendants at the first and third Moscow trials as well as Frinovskii's and Ezhov's own guilt.

No evidence exists to support the hypothesis that the NKVD forced Rakovsky to structure his confessions in order to confirm Trotsky's "predictions" of February 27 and April 15, 1937. On the contrary, all the evidence we have suggests that Rakovsky confessed voluntarily without prompting from any source.

After recounting how one Japanese official told him that the Japanese government was dissatisfied with Trotsky's writings and with the activities of the Chinese Trotskyists Rakovsky said:

> I wrote to Trotsky about all this—about my negotiations in Tokyo, about my conversations with Yurenev, about my meetings, and, of course, about this last proposition. (1938 Moscow Trial, 294)

That would account for Trotsky's knowing what Rakovsky might testify, and so for Trotsky's "prediction."

Trotsky Conspired with the Japanese

The only hypothesis that can successfully account for the evidence now available is that Trotsky did indeed collaborate with the Japanese. Trotsky aimed to make the charge appear so absurd and yet so obvious that he could "predict" it in advance. But we know that Trotsky frequently did this before in hopes of blunting the sting of a charge that he knew might soon be made against him because it was true.

In *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* we examined the "name of Trotsky" issue in the Kirov murder case, the "restoration of capitalism," and the "armed intervention" charges. We also established that Trotsky lied a great deal. Trotsky had to lie, of course. Lying is essential in any conspiracy. But this fact means that we can never accept Trotsky's statements, including his denials, as truthful.

We have also seen how Trotsky used the stratagem of "exposing the scheme in advance" many times. We have discovered that he did this as a way to ward off, in advance, accusations that he could be reasonably certain would be forthcoming.[54] Trotsky could not prevent the Soviet prosecution – "Stalin" – from uncovering and exposing his, Trotsky's, conspiratorial activities. But he could claim that these accusations were so crude, so transparent, that he could even "predict" them in advance.

In the present case Trotsky overstepped. He would have done much better to make a more general "prediction" – say, that Rakovsky would confess to some kind of clandestine contact with some Japanese figures. Instead, Trotsky stated *exactly* what Rakovsky would confess. This was a "prediction" so precise that the only way Trotsky could have made it is if he knew what Rakovsky would say – that is, if Rakovsky's confession was true.

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[54] See Furr, *Trotsky's 'Amalgams,'* Chapters 13 through 15, sections titled "Expose the scheme in advance."

Cherniavskii expresses concern that Rakovsky did not always name only persons who had already been convicted and whom therefore, his confessions could presumably not harm any further. He specifically mentions the diplomats K.K. IUrenev and D.V. Bogomolov. Rakovsky's face-to-face confrontation with IUrenev was on September 22, 1937, with Bogomolov on October 8. (507) This was before their arrests. Cherniavskii states that IUrenev and Bogomolov had already been arrested by the time Rakovsky named them, but this is not the case. IUrenev was arrested on September 23, 1937, Bogomolov on October 13, 1937.[55]

It appears that Rakovsky was given credit for having freely confessed some things that would otherwise not have been known. One example was Rakovsky's confession of espionage for Japan. Rakovsky also seems to have identified some persons about whose participation in the anti-Soviet conspiracy the NKVD did not know. Rakovsky was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Another defendant in the same trial, Dr. D.D. Pletnev, was given a 25-year sentence on the grounds that he had known of the conspiracy to murder some of his famous patients and, although he had not contributed to their deaths, he had not voluntarily informed on the conspiracy even when Iagoda had been removed from office and he had the chance to do so. By contrast, Rakovsky had given important information voluntarily.

Rakovsky's Fraudulent Rehabilitation

Rakovsky was rehabilitated by a decree of the Soviet Supreme Court on February 4, 1988. The text of the rehabilitation decree is still secret in Russia today. But in 1995 General Dmitrii Volkogonov authorized the shipment of his archive out of Russia to the West. A copy ended up in the Library of Congress. In 2000 the Volkogonov Archive became open to researchers. A careful perusal

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55 Yurenev: The Sakharov Center: http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/martirolog/?t=page&id=15808 Bogomolov: Memorial Society, "List of Victims of Political Repression": http://lists.memo.ru/d4/f458.htm#n1

of this poorly-indexed archive turned up a copy of the rehabilitation decree. We can be sure it is the right document because a reproduction of the header of the first and footer of the last page of the original was reproduced in the 1991 book *Reabilitatsiia. Politicheskie protsessy 30-50-kh godov*, pp. 240-241.

This rehabilitation report is falsified. On page 7 we find the following statement:

> According to the testimony of former NKVD worker Aronson, questioned in 1956, the convicted prisoner Kh.G. Rakovsky while in prison in May of 1941 also told him about the falsification of the materials of the criminal case and about his wrongful conviction.

We have already considered this alleged statement by "Aronson," also attributed by Serov to an "agent Finn." It is hearsay at best and most likely a fabrication solicited by Serov for his July 7, 1956, report. In any case, the mere claim of a defendant that the evidence against him was falsified and that he is innocent, carries no weight as evidence unless it is firmly corroborated by other independent testimony or physical evidence.

Page 6 of the rehabilitation report summarizes parts of Frinovskii's confession statement of April 11, 1939, as follows:

> Former Assistant People's Commissar for Internal Affairs of the USSR Frinovskii in his statement of April 11, 1939, admitted that workers of the NKVD USSR "prepared" the prisoners for the interrogations at face-to-face confrontations, alerting them to possible questions and answers to them. Ezhov frequently talked with those to be interrogated. If the prisoner recanted his confessions he gave the investigator the order to "restore" the prisoner, that is to obtain from him his previous false confessions. According to Frinovskii's confessions Ezhov often spoke with N.I. Bukharin, A.I. Rykov, P.P. Bulanov and other defendants

> and tried to convince each of them that the court would spare their lives if they admitted their guilt.

The rehabilitation report conceals Frinovskii's specific statement, in his confession statement, that Ezhov took a hands-off stance towards the 1938 Moscow trial.

> An active participant in investigations generally, Ezhov kept himself aloof from the preparation of this trial...

It also falsifies through omission by concealing Frinovskii's explanation of what Ezhov told the defendants: not that their lives would be spared if they confessed, but if they did not mention Ezhov's participation in the conspiracy.

> Here Ezhov unquestionably was ruled by the necessity of covering up his own ties with the arrested leaders of the Right who were going into the public trial.

It also omits all the parts of Frinovskii's statement in which he makes it clear Zinoviev, Kamenev, and the defendants in the March 1938 Moscow trial really were conspirators; that he and Ezhov were involved in this conspiracy; and much more.

The "rehabilitation" report contains this passage:

> Former workers of the NKVD of the USSR Frinovskii, Agranov, Nikolaev, Dmitriev, Tserpento, Ushakov, Chistov, Passov, Kogan, Gerzon, Glebov, Lulov and others, who took a direct role in the investigation of this criminal case, were later convicted for illegal arrests, falsification of evidence, and other very serious violations of law.

We know that many of these men had in fact been involved in the investigation of the defendants in the March 1938 trial.[56] The most

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[56] Iakov S. Agranov was expelled from the Party in July 1937 and arrested on July 20, 1937, almost seven months before the trial. The editors of *Genrikh Iagoda*, who had access to

significant falsification here is by omission. Most of these men were Ezhov's accomplices in the massive frame-ups of innocent persons. After Ezhov's removal they were investigated, arrested, tried, and shot under Beria. Of the others who can be identified and about whom we have found reliable data, Nikolaev-Zhurid was arrested October 25, 1938, tried and convicted February 4, 1939; D.M. Dmitriev was arrested June 28, 1938, tried and convicted March 7, 1939; Z.I. Passov was arrested October 22, 1938, tried and convicted February 14, 1940.

All these men were tried and convicted, during Beria's investigation of Ezhov's crimes. It was Stalin and his close associates who appointed Beria to replace Ezhov and then to investigate and prosecute the crimes of Ezhov and his men.

There is no evidence that the March 1938 Moscow trial involving Rakovsky and others had anything to do with the convictions of these men. Frinovskii's statement makes it clear that the 1938 Moscow trial defendants of whom he speaks, Bukharin, Iagoda, Rykov, and Bulanov, were guilty and also concealed Ezhov's participation in the conspiracy.

Rakovsky was rehabilitated as a part of the group of defendants in the March 1938 trial who had not been rehabilitated previously.[57]

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former NKVD files now in possession of the FSB (successor to the NKVD, MVD-MGB, KGB) revealed in 1997 that Agranov was convicted of involvement in Iagoda's conspiracy and in a conspiracy with the Socialist Revolutionaries. He admitted guilt in letters to Stalin and Ezhov. A partial transcript of an interrogation of former NKVD man Trilisser in January 1939 records that Trilisser named Agranov as one of Iagoda's co-conspirators.(*Genrikh Iagoda*, 39-40; 531).

[57] Those rehabilitated on February 4, 1988, those previously rehabilitated, and the one person, Iagoda, who was not rehabilitated, are listed in the transcript of the Politburo Commission of February 5, 1988:

Принято к сведению сообщение председателя Верховного Суда СССР о том, что Пленум Верховного Суда своим постановлением 4 февраля 1988 г. отменил приговор Военной Коллегии в отношении осужденных Н.И. Бухарина, А.И. Рыкова, А.П. Розенгольца, М.А. Чернова, П.П. Буланова, Л.Г. Левина, И.Н. Казакова, В.А. Максимова-Диковского, П.П. Крючкова и Х.Г. Раковского и дело прекратил за отсутствием в их действиях состава преступления.

Other than the statement from "Aronson" which we have examined above the Rehabilitation report contains no evidence consistent with Rakovsky's innocence.

Conclusion

The main conclusion of this chapter is that Leon Trotsky did collaborate with the Japanese. This is the only hypothesis that accounts for the evidence we now have. Trotsky had a practice of anticipating charges that he surmised would probably be made against him because they were true and because persons who knew about his activities had been arrested There is no other way Trotsky could have "predicted" long in advance that Rakovsky would claim at trial that he was mediating between Trotsky and Japanese military men in the government..

Cherniavskii read Rakovsky's file. He confirms that Rakovsky himself volunteered the information that he had agreed to what amounted to espionage for Japan – to carrying messages for Japanese intelligence to Trotsky who had some prior agreement with the Japanese. This means we can be certain that the NKVD did not learn about Trotsky's "prediction" of February 27, 1937, and then, inspired by it, force Rakovsky to confirm it and confess to espionage for Japan.

What's more, the court's verdict against Rakovsky did not even mention this espionage. Why would the NKVD – "Stalin" – fabricate a charge that Rakovsky had been Trotsky's emissary to the Japanese, supply the names of important Japanese political figures, force Rakovsky to confess to this charge and to name these names,

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Ранее Верховным Судом СССР по этому же делу и по тем же мотивам были полностью реабилитированы Н.Н. Крестинский, Г.Ф. Гринько, И.А. Зеленский, В.И. Иванов, С.А. Бессонов, А. Икрамов, Ф. Ходжаев, В.Ф. Шарангович, П.Т. Зубарев и Д.Д. Плетнев.

Протест в отношении Г.Г. Ягоды, проходившего по этому делу, Прокуратурой СССР не приносился.

- RKEB 3, p. 49. Also at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/66068

and then insist that the names not appear in the trial testimony and Rakovsky not be convicted on the espionage charge? There is no shred of evidence to support such a vacuous and self-contradictory hypothesis.

The verdict most likely reflected the judges' determination that Rakovsky had cooperated with the prosecution by confessing to crimes that the prosecution did not know about from other sources. Rakovsky seems to have also done this when he named IUrenev and Bogomolov. IUrenev was arrested on September 23, 1937, the day after the face-to-face confrontation with Rakovsky. Bogomolov was arrested on October 13, 1937, five days after his October 8 face-to-face confrontation with Rakovsky. This implies that the NKVD did not have enough evidence against either man to arrest them until Rakovsky exposed them. Both IUrenev and Bogomolov were tried, convicted, and executed; Rakovsky was not executed.

Our conclusion that Trotsky did collaborate in some fashion with the Japanese is consistent with a great deal of other evidence of his collaboration with Germany and Japan. We study this evidence in other chapters of the present book.

There is a striking lack of objectivity – in fact, a rejection of the concept of objectivity itself – in the historiography of the Stalin years, including that of the Moscow trials. Often this lack of objectivity takes the form of outright denial: "I don't believe it; therefore it is not true." This is the argument from incredulity, a specific form of "begging the question," assuming that which is to be proven, and a logical fallacy.

Lack of objectivity often takes the form of rejecting all NKVD evidence, all Moscow trial evidence, or even all Soviet evidence. To assume any evidence is invalid is once again to commit the fallacy of "begging the question." In order to argue, much less prove, that testimony is not true, that material evidence is forged, planted, etc., evidence is needed.

Lack of objectivity can also take the form of rejecting a hypothesis because evidence from some specific source or other is lacking. This too is a logical fallacy: "Lack of evidence is not necessarily evidence of lack." The fact that no documentary evidence from German or Japanese archives has been found that confirms Trotsky's collaboration is *not* evidence that Trotsky did not collaborate.

In this as in all historical inquiry the proper question is not "What really happened?" Instead it is: "What conclusion best accounts for the evidence we have?" All historical inquiry is in principle without time limits. We must regard all conclusions as provisional, to be amended upon the discovery either of new evidence or of a better interpretation of the existing evidence.

By the same token we must stand by the hypothesis that best accounts for the evidence we now have, even when – especially when – that conclusion contradicts or insults our strongly-held preferences, biases, or preconceived ideas. Only such an approach can be termed objective.

By these standards we are compelled to conclude that Leon Trotsky did collaborate with the Japanese and that Khristian Rakovsky was a party to this collaboration.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

Based on the nature and amount of the evidence we have we must conclude that Leon Trotsky did indeed collaborate with the Germans and Japanese.

The evidence we have cited cannot be accounted for by any processes of fabrication:

* There is far too much of it.

* Much of it was never intended to be made public.

* It comes from different sources.

* It is all mutually corroborative. Evidence about Trotsky's German/Japanese collaboration is part of a complex of evidence about other conspiracies by other persons. Those conspiracies are well supported by evidence too. This corroborates the part of that evidence that inculpates Trotsky.

* Some of the evidence – that of the Tukhachevsky Affair interrogation testimony and trial confessions, and Iakovlev's confession – is so strong that it would be sufficient to establish the fact of Trotsky's collaboration in and of itself, even if we did not have any additional archival or trial evidence.

* There is no evidence counteracting it.

During Khrushchev's time, during Gorbachev's tenure as head of the CPSU and then of the USSR, during Eltsin's time, and in fact until today, an enormous amount of effort has been devoted by the Soviet government and Party leaders and subsequently by the Russian government to find evidence in the archives that proves the Moscow Trials and Tukhachevsky Affair defendants were framed. All such searches have been fruitless.

In principle all claims to historical truth remain forever subject to revision in the light of new evidence which may be discovered in

the future, or of new and better interpretations of the existing evidence. But in this case it seems there is nowhere for future contradictory evidence to come from. Even though they are still top-secret and only a tiny number of researchers can see them, we know that the Soviet archives have been thoroughly searched.

It is reasonable to surmise that no evidence that exculpates the Moscow Trials defendants, or Trotsky, will be discovered in future. In fact just the opposite is the case: we can be confident that much in the archives is still classified because it would confirm the guilt of the defendants of the 1930s and disconfirm the "anti-Stalin" paradigm. This would be the "cannon shot," in Col. Alksnis's words, that would destroy the anticommunist – and, of course, the Trotskyist – historiography of the Stalin era.

Objectivity and Denial

There is only one conclusion consistent with an objective assessment of the evidence we now have. We have not reached this conclusion out of animosity against Trotsky or, for that matter, out of partisanship for Stalin. On the contrary: like other people, scholars have preconceived ideas and prejudices. In the search for historical truth as in science, scholars are obliged to form a hypothesis and put it to the test – which means they must be ready to find evidence contradictory to their hypothesis. In this case the evidence confirms our hypothesis that Trotsky did collaborate with Germany and Japan.

Some people will find this conclusion to be unacceptable to them. Few subjects during the past century have so engaged the passions of so many men and women as has the communist movement. Within that movement surely one of the most contentious issues has and continues to be the "Stalin vs Trotsky" debate. There are few "Stalinists"[1] around today — though that situation may be

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[1] I use scare quotes here because, unlike Trotskyists, supporters of Stalin have only rarely described themselves as "Stalinists," which is a term of disapproval employed by Trotskyists and anticommunists.

changing somewhat, especially within Russia. There are many more supporters of Trotsky. Trotskyists are passionately devoted to a heroic version of Trotsky's life and legacy.

Anticommunists and Trotskyists are both loyal to a paradigm of Soviet history and especially of the 1930s that is utterly incompatible with the conclusions we have drawn in this essay. We predict that, regardless of the evidence, neither staunch anticommunists nor Trotskyists will ever accept that Trotsky did in fact collaborate with Germany and Japan. The "Cold War paradigm" – or, as we have called it, the "anti-Stalin paradigm" of Soviet history during Stalin's time depends upon the construction of Stalin as an evil man who was killing innocent people, orchestrating judicial frame-ups, and – for Trotskyists – destroying the communist movement. If Trotsky and, by implication, the oppositionists who worked with him were guilty of the crimes with which they were charged and to which most, though not Trotsky, confessed, then this anti-Stalin paradigm of Soviet history is dismantled.

Trotsky's and Sedov's denials cannot be taken seriously. It is true generally that denials of guilt are of little interest to any investigator. The guilty as well as the innocent can be expected to proclaim their innocence. And while even confessions of guilt should not be automatically assumed to be truthful, the same is decidedly true of professions of innocence.

It is certain that there will be readers of this essay who will deny the conclusions of this analysis, and will do so by raising one or more of the objections we will now consider.

Torture

The issue of torture is cited very often as, supposedly, an "explanation" for the confessions by all the persons whose testimony we have cited here. In fact this is a very weak explanation.

Is it possible that all the accounts by all the witnesses we have cited could have been obtained by torturing, or otherwise forcing, the witnesses to make these statements, and then carefully coor-

dinating or "scripting" them? Is it possible that *all* the defendants memorized "scripted" confessions to make during the investigation, when the materials were all secret; then again at the public trial; and then again in the texts of their secret appeals for clemency to the Soviet Supreme Court – and all out of fear of "torture"?

The question of torture is an important one as it goes to the heart of our study and of historical methodology generally – namely, the question of evidence. First: it is not easy to determine whether or not a given individual was, in fact, tortured.

* It should be obvious that the mere fact that a defendant claims he was tortured does not mean that he was in fact tortured. The general principle is that no one should simply be assumed to be telling the truth, or assumed to be lying, without substantiating evidence. Falsely claiming one was tortured could be a way of explaining shameful behavior – naming others in one's confession, for example – while preserving some self-respect or dignity. During and after the Khrushchev period it became well known that defendants could often get their convictions vacated and rights restored by claiming they had been tortured.

* We can't conclude that an arrestee was tortured simply because an NKVD investigator later said that he was. This is true *a fortiori* if the NKVD man (or someone else) claims to know it at second hand, from someone else, rather than confessing to torturing the prisoner himself.

* We have to be skeptical of what NKVD men or other investigators wrote or testified during the Khrushchev years. During this time NKVD men were not simply threatened with serious penalties, including death, but some were actually executed on the grounds that they had beaten prisoners during the 1930s up to 1940-41, despite the fact that Khrushchev himself claimed this had been permitted by a Central Committee decision.

* Even less can we accept the "fruit of the poisoned tree" argument: "A was, apparently, tortured, and he named B and C, so ALL were, in fact, innocent."

The "fruit of the poisoned tree" logic is a judicial – legal – principle. It means that evidence obtained in an unlawful manner should not be used in court *even when that evidence discloses a crime*. It does not speak to the question of guilt or innocence, and guilt or innocence is what we are interested in.

* We can't conclude that an arrestee was innocent of the crimes he was charged with, or to which he confessed, on the sole grounds that he, or someone else, claims he was tortured. First, those claims may be false. Second, the fact that someone has been tortured does not mean that they were innocent. Guilty persons can also be tortured and coerced into confessing actual crimes.

* If there were repeated written complaints of torture, coupled with retractions of confessions during the investigation, at trial, or both, that would lend credence to such complaints. If and when they are also accompanied by confessions of torture by the torturer(s) and/or their superiors, the claims would become even more credible. But we have none of these things concerning the defendants at the Moscow Trials or the Tukhachevsky Affair.

Furthermore, even if we could be reasonably assured that a defendant was tortured, that does not mean that the defendant was innocent of all crimes he was charged with. A number of defendants who claimed they were tortured made differentiated confessions, withdrawing part of their confessions on the grounds that they were false, made under duress, but *not* withdrawing other parts. This is strong evidence that the part of the confession *not* withdrawn is truthful – otherwise, why not withdraw or deny all of it?

The fact that a confession could not be used in evidence against a defendant unless it had been confirmed at trial, and that many defendants did in fact retract their confessions at trial, means that we should be hesitant to discount confessions by persons who did *not* retract their confessions at trial when they could have done so.

Moreover, there were a number of reasons why a defendant might withdraw his confession at trial. One would be, of course, that he was really innocent and the confession was false. But another is

that doing so would force the prosecution to produce at trial other evidence of the defendant's guilt – for example, the testimony of his accusers or material evidence. And that could delay matters, perhaps winning time for an appeal. According to Aleksei Pavliukov, a recent biographer of Ezhov, it seems that Nikolai Ezhov withdrew his numerous confessions at trial for exactly this reason. (Pavliukov 2007, 530)

We can be confident – at least, until good evidence to the contrary should be discovered – that the torture of many defendants, though not of those whose statements we examine in this article, did take place because the evidence for it comes from a number of different sources. The chances that all that evidence could have been "orchestrated" – fabricated into a coherent pattern – become negligible.

For the same reason we can be confident that Trotsky did conspire with the Germans and Japanese. There is so much evidence of it, from so many different sources, and it is so consistent with other information we have, that the chances it has all been fabricated is vanishingly small.

The Charge of "Torture" As Smokescreen

Could torture have been going on "behind the scenes" so that we have no knowledge of it? Or, should we simply assume that a defendant was tortured if he confessed to serious crimes, even if we have no evidence that he was?

To this second question the response has to be: No. We must always demand evidence. Without evidence that some event occurred it is illegitimate to conclude that it did. It is not scientific to assume that something is going on unseen and leaving no trace. If in fact there is no material evidence that a given witness was lying, while evidence that corroborates some of his statements does exist, we must conclude that he was not lying. Likewise, absent evidence that a person was tortured it is illegitimate to assume that he was and legitimate to assume for all practical purposes and for the time being, that he was not.

We have no evidence that any of the defendants in the three Moscow Trials were tortured. In the best-documented case, that of Nikolai Bukharin, we know as certainly as we ever can that Bukharin was *not* tortured.[2] Stephen F. Cohen, author of the most famous and influential book about Bukharin, has concluded that Bukharin could not have been tortured. (Cohen 2003, 61) Cohen is still convinced Bukharin was innocent. But has no way of explaining why Bukharin confessed.

The issue of torture is separate from the issue of guilt or innocence. It should be obvious that guilty persons can be tortured too. "Means of physical pressure," the usual general term (and euphemism) in the USSR at this time, could be applied to defendants to induce them to confess to what they actually had done. Therefore, even if it can be proven somehow that a person actually has been tortured that does not mean he did not commit the acts he is charged with. It only means that, according at least to the rules of jurisprudence in some countries, his confession should not be used against him at trial.

In a court procedure evidence that a defendant has made statements because of mistreatment or threats is (or is supposed to be) sufficient to have the statements thrown out. This practice is necessary to protect the rights of the defendant. It's also necessary to guarantee that the investigators actually try to solve crimes instead of simply mistreating suspects until one of them confesses. That evidence of mistreatment does or does not come to the attention of the court, in many cases in many countries, is beside the present point. But we have no evidence that the Soviet courts violated this principle in the 1930s.

Historians are faced with a different situation. The question of guilt or innocence is not at all the same as that of whether a defendant received a fair trial. For instance, there is broad agreement among historians that the Haymarket defendants in Chicago in

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[2] Furr and Bobrov, 10 and note.

1886 did not receive a fair trial, but there is debate about whether one of them, August Spies, may have fabricated the bomb and whether another, Louis Lingg, may have thrown it. Likewise there is a consensus that Sacco and Vanzetti did not receive a fair trial in Massachusetts in 1921, but there is some disagreement as to whether Sacco may in fact have committed the murder for which they were both executed.

A guilty person may confess guilt whether tortured or not. A guilty person may claim innocence even if tortured, or if not tortured. Likewise, an innocent person may confess guilt if tortured, but innocent persons have been known to falsely confess guilt without any compulsion at all. And an innocent person may persist in proclaiming her innocence under torture or absent any mistreatment.

Among the military figures, Putna and Fel'dman *may* have been beaten. We do not even know that for certain. It is stated in the Shvernik Report and in the "rehabilitation" document of 1989 that draws upon it. But many of these "rehabilitation" documents are falsified. As always, there is no certain evidence.

But even if they were beaten, that does not indicate whether they were guilty or innocent. The Shvernik Report contains much evidence of their guilt. So, whether they were tortured or not, we have a lot of evidence that they were guilty. And it is guilt or innocence – what happened – rather than whether proper judicial procedure was used, that concerns us here.

The idea that not only the military men in the Tukhachevsky Affair but *all* the defendants in all the Moscow Trials could have been made to confess to false charges by torture or the threat of it, despite the lack of evidence of either torture or threat, is as absurd as any statement we are likely to face. But that fact is never going to stop those who want and need to believe these men were innocent from believing it.

We have no evidence that any of the other defendants in the Tukhachevsky Affair were beaten or otherwise tortured. As we have seen above in our examination of the Budennyi letter[3] we have excellent evidence that these men confessed at their private trial. We know that Khrushchev-era and Gorbachev-era "rehabilitation" commissions lied and dissembled in a vain attempt to argue the innocence of these and many other defendants. We have discussed a number of examples of this in detail in an examination of Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" of 1956.[4]

The charge of "torture" serves the purpose of deflecting attention away from the evidence that we do have. As invoked in the historiography of the Moscow Trials and Tukhachevsky Affair it is a smokescreen, a rhetorical, propaganda device to stop us from looking squarely at the large body of evidence we have. It is an attempt to make us disregard that evidence.

Lack of German or Japanese Evidence

The objection will be heard: "If there had really been such a conspiracy then some documentation of it would have been found in captured German or Japanese archives."

The principle "lack of evidence is not necessarily evidence of a lack" applies here. The lack of evidence in German or Japanese archives would not destroy the other evidence we do have, and which we have analyzed above. It would not mean that no conspiracy existed.

However, any claim that no such documentation exists would be false. We do have evidence from both Czech and German archives that during the period roughly from the end of 1936 through the first quarter of 1937 Hitler and the German government were

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[3] We have studied Budennyi's letter to Voroshilov in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'* Chapter 9, and in Furr, Grover, and Vladimir L. Bobrov. "Marshal S.M. Budiennyi on the Tukhachevsky Trial. Impressions of an Eye-Witness" (in Russian). Klio No. 2 (2012), pp. 8-24.

[4] See Furr, *Khrushchev Lied.*

awaiting a military coup against the Stalin regime. Thanks to a slip of the tongue by a Japanese military commander in a talk with Japanese journalists in early 1937 we know that Opposition figures within the USSR were sending the Japanese military information – that, is, committing espionage. Genrikh Liushkov privately told the Japanese that real conspiracies existed among Soviet military leaders, even naming some of those against whom other evidence exists. We also have a great deal of other evidence concerning the defendants in the Moscow Trials and the Tukhachevsky Affair that points to the guilt of the defendants. This too is consistent with the results of our present investigation.

Lack of Documentary Proof

As we discussed earlier, Getty discovered that the Trotsky Archive at Harvard had been imperfectly purged of evidence that Trotsky was in contact with his followers in the USSR. Meanwhile Trotsky and Sedov lied in denying such contact. Suppose the purging had been more competent and that all trace of this contact had been successfully removed. Would that mean that no such contact had taken place? Of course it would not. And as this essay has demonstrated, there is no lack of such evidence in other locations. In fact, in the face of such a plethora of alternative evidence, the only partially successful removal of a portion of the evidence from the Trotsky Archive is itself evidence of someone's desire to cover up Trotsky's and Sedov's guilt.

Thanks to Getty we know that there used to be some kind of incriminating documentation of Trotsky's activities in his own archive. Was there other such documentation aside from that we know to have existed – letters to his major supporters inside the USSR? We don't know. We can't legitimately conclude that there wasn't, or for that matter that there was.

It is an error in logic and method to fetishize documentary evidence. *Any* kind of evidence, including documentary evidence, can be faked. In fact it would arguably have been easier to forge documents inculpating Trotsky in the alleged collaboration with Germany and Japan than to coordinate a large number of confessions,

particularly public ones, and then coordinate a number of secret, written appeals for clemency, all testifying to events that never in fact happened.

In order to conclude that, despite the evidence cited in this article, Trotsky did not collaborate with Germany and Japan one would be forced to assume that the Soviet authorities orchestrated a vast network of false confessions by many individuals over many months, all of which inculpate Trotsky of German and/or Japanese collaboration, and in a more or less consistent manner. There is no evidence that this kind of orchestration actually took place.

It is tacitly supposed that it all happened "behind the scenes," out of sight of the public trials. Yet now that, thanks to archival documents, we have a glimpse "behind the scenes" we can discern no such fabrication. On the contrary: the investigative materials we now have only confirm the trial testimony.

The vast majority of the investigative materials remain top-secret in Russia today. We simply do not know what kind of evidence they may hold. Some of it is certainly documentary. We don't know whether any of it is documentary evidence of Trotsky's collaboration with Germany and Japan. The fact that we do not know about any evidence in the secret Soviet archives inculpating Trotsky does not mean such evidence does not exist. It only means we do not know about any.

We know that there is other documentary evidence of some of the conspiracies. The Shvernik Report discusses the Arao Document, a communication from a Japanese military attaché to his superior in Japan testifying to secret contact with a representative of Marshal Tukhachevsky. The Report gives the text of this telegram. Therefore it must have still existed in 1962-64 when the report was being compiled. We discuss the Arao Document in *Trotsky's 'Amalgams.'*

Yet Iulia Kantor does not even mention it in her two supposedly authoritative books on Tukhachevsky, though of course she knew of it. Kantor wanted to support the theory that Tukhachevsky and

the rest were innocent, and this document would not have been helpful. We don't know whether the physical document still exists or not. We can be thankful that the Shvernik Report compilers transcribed and discussed it.

What kind of written documentation of a clandestine conspiracy should we expect to have ever existed? Both Radek and Tukhachevsky claim that they had notes from Trotsky which they burned. It would have been foolish in the extreme for them *not* to have destroyed such incriminating evidence. The Bolsheviks were experienced in working conspiratorially. They had years of practice doing so under the Tsar. They knew better than to keep written lists of fellow conspirators, written plans, and in general anything in writing that would, if discovered by the police, cause disaster to the conspiracy.

Corroborative Evidence

There are two kinds of evidence that corroborate the direct evidence of Trotsky's collaboration with Germany and Japan. The first is the testimony of those who like Nikolai Bukharin and Genrikh Iagoda admitted to participation in a bloc or alliance with others who had first-hand knowledge of Trotsky's collaboration with Germany and/or Japan but who claimed no ties with Germany or Japan themselves.

Iagoda testified that he learned of Trotsky's direct contact with the Germans from Avel' Enukidze and Lev Karakhan. We have examined Karakhan's testimony above. Most of Enukidze's investigative file is still secret. Neither of the two interrogations of Enukidze published to date mentions his contacts with Trotsky.

Concerning Nikolai Bukharin we have much more information than about any of the other defendants in the various Soviet trials. We have discovered, edited, and published his first confession of June 2, 1937. This is also the only pre-trial confession of Bukharin that we have; the Russian government continues to keep all the

others secret.[5] We have also discovered and published the falsified decree of the Gorbachev-era Soviet Supreme Court "rehabilitating" Bukharin on February 4, 1988, together with a study of it.[6] Neither of these documents was ever made accessible to researchers, much less published, before or during Gorbachev's day; both are still top-secret in Russia today. The "rehabilitation" decree cites a quotation from a document — Mikhail Frinovskii's confession statement of April 11, 1939 — that was secret in 1988 but that has since been published. That document is cited as evidence that Bukharin was innocent. In fact it contains evidence that Bukharin was guilty.

Bukharin's first confession implicates Trotsky, as does his Trial testimony. We have also examined Bukharin's appeal of his death sentence to the Soviet Supreme Court, in which he reiterates his guilt and claims that for his crimes he should be "shot ten times over."

There is no reason whatever to doubt that Bukharin was telling the truth in his pre-trial and trial confessions and in his post-trial appeal. Bukharin was very clear and explicit that Radek had told him more than once about Trotsky's involvement with the Germans and Japanese.

This is corroborative evidence. Bukharin's first confession corroborates Radek's confession at the January 1937 Trial – Bukharin confirms what Radek said, meanwhile adding a bit more detail. Bukharin's first confession also corroborates the truthfulness of his own statements at his trial in March 1938. The most striking corroboration is Bukharin's two appeals after his trial, where he confirms his guilt in the strongest possible terms.

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[5] We have discovered one additional confession of Bukharin's of February 20, 1938. This confession is still secret in Russia. It does not deal with Trotsky.

[6] Grover Furr, Vladimir Bobrov, 1937. *Pravosudie Stalina. Obzhalovaniiu ne podlezhit!* Moscow: Algoritm, 2010, Ch. 2: "Reabilitatsionnoe moshenichestvo."

A second kind of corroborative evidence consists of evidence from persons who claimed first-hand or second-hand knowledge of Trotsky's collaboration and who themselves were working with either Germany or Japan. According to the evidence now available three of the eight figures in the Tukhachevsky Affair – Primakov, Putna, and Tukhachevsky himself – had direct contact with both Trotsky and the Germans. The other six defendants, all officers of the highest ranks, would almost certainly have known about Trotsky's involvement.

Very little of the investigative and judicial (trial) materials in the three Moscow Trials, the Tukhachevsky Affair, and the broader military conspiracy, has been made public. The rest remains top-secret in Russia today, probably for the reasons Col. Alksnis suggests. Still, enough has leaked out that we have a great deal of evidence, some of it documentary, of German and Japanese collaboration by oppositionists, including military figures.

We also have a number of transcripts of interrogation-confessions of Nikolai Ezhov, head of the NKVD between September 1936 and November 1938. In the earliest one that we have, an interrogation dated April 26, 1939, Ezhov testifies to his own direct collaboration with German military and intelligence figures. Ezhov stated he too was in contact with General Hammerstein.[7] Hammerstein asked Ezhov specifically how much influence the Trotskyists had in the Bolshevik Party.

> Question: Did your further meetings with Hammerstein take place?
>
> Answer: Yes, I had three more meetings with Hammerstein. At the second meeting Hammerstein expressed interest in the details related to the murder of

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[7] *Lubianka. Stalin i NKVD – NKGB – GUKR «SMERSH». 1939 – mart 1946.* Moscow: "Materik", 2006. No. 37, 52-72. Russian original at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/ezhovru.html and at http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/58654 English translation by Grover Furr at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/ezhov042639eng.html

> S.M. Kirov, and **about how serious the influence of Trotskyites, Zinovievites and Rights in the ACP(b) was.** (59-60)

The German general's interest in this subject is consistent with the considerable evidence we have seen of Trotsky's collaboration with Germany.

What kinds of corroborative evidence might be admissible in a criminal trial is a legal question. It would be decided differently according to the time of the trial and the jurisdiction or country in which the trial took place. In some jurisdictions rules of evidence in cases of conspiracy might differ from rules in other criminal cases.

In a historical study we are interested in something else: consistency. The corroborative evidence is consistent with the direct evidence. The existence of such corroborative evidence reduces even further the possibility that all the direct evidence was fabricated – a negligible possibility by itself.

Trotsky's Possible Motives

Our conclusions here are based not on any prejudice or animus for or against Trotsky but on the evidence. The late Pierre Broué, for decades a leading Trotskyist scholar, admitted on the basis of the evidence that Trotsky deliberately lied to the Dewey Commission. Yet Broué did not believe that to admit this constituted criticism of Trotsky. The present essay concludes on the basis of massive evidence that Trotsky did conspire with the Germans and Japanese. This conclusion is in itself not a criticism of Trotsky. Whether one evaluates Trotsky's collaboration in a negative light or not depends upon one's political values.

Lenin conspired with the Imperial German government and military to go through the German lines to reach Petrograd in April 1917 on the famous "sealed train." That led to the Provisional Government's accusing Lenin (and the Bolsheviks) of being a "German

spy," an accusation which is still occasionally voiced by anticommunists.

In 1918 Lenin insisted upon signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, an agreement which gave the Germans a lot of Russian territory and ended Germany's two-front war. Lenin was called a "German agent" by some for doing this too. It is the reason that the Socialist-Revolutionary Fanni Kaplan tried to kill Lenin and other Socialist-Revolutionaries did kill Soviet diplomat Moisei Uritskii and German diplomat Wilhelm Mirbach. They wished to sabotage this "pro-German" peace in order to promote a continuation of the war. It is the reason Bukharin and other Left Communists considered arresting Lenin, Stalin, and Sverdlov at that time.[8]

Trotsky had a complicated view of the USSR in the mid-30s. At times he seemed to think that the leading stratum of the Bolshevik Party, or Stalin at the very least, had to be removed from power in order for the revolution to be saved both in the USSR and in the rest of the world. Given this outlook, he may have reasoned that what he was doing was similar to what Lenin had done: compromise with the capitalist powers in order to save the Revolution.

By the same token, the requirements of conspiracy would have prevented Trotsky from openly acknowledging such collaboration. The Germans and Japanese would not have dealt with him openly. And to do so would have put anybody associated with him at great risk.

Additionally, most Trotskyists and sympathizers supported the Russian Revolution, were strongly anti-fascist, and had not necessarily decided that the only road to saving world communism was to change the leadership of the USSR at any cost. Knowledge of his

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[8] Bukharin admitted this during the 1920s. At his trial in March 1938 Bukharin vehemently denied that this plot also encompassed the possibility of murdering Lenin, Stalin, and Sverdlov, as several former S-Rs asserted in testimony against him. Whatever his subjective intent may have been, many S-Rs were ferociously anti-Bolshevik and embraced assassination – "terror" in Russian – as a political tactic, so putting Lenin, Stalin, and Sverdlov at the S-Rs' mercy would certainly leave them vulnerable to possible murder.

collaboration with Germany and Japan would surely have cost Trotsky many of his relatively few adherents.

The evidence available to us today overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that Leon Trotsky collaborated with Germany and Japan in a conspiracy to overthrow the Soviet government and the Bolshevik Party leadership around Stalin, and to meet the demands of the fascists for partitioning the USSR, exiling the Comintern, opening the front to German and Japanese invaders, and making other economic and political concessions. Historians may alter these conclusions in future if more evidence comes to light. But these are facts that cannot be wished away.

Did Trotsky Lie Again?

We have already noted that only a small number of men – eight of the defendants at the three Moscow Trials plus at least three and perhaps as many as six of the military figures – claimed that they were told of Trotsky's collaboration with Germany or Japan at first hand, either from Trotsky himself or from his son Leon Sedov. We believe that there are no grounds for dismissing this testimony.

But none of these men claimed to have personally witnessed any meetings between Trotsky (or Sedov) and German or Japanese representatives. Perhaps Trotsky was lying to them? Is it possible that Trotsky did not in fact have such contacts with the Germans and Japanese but was only claiming to have them – to raise the hopes of his followers and his own prestige among them, perhaps?

The evidence suggests this was not the case. Radek, Sokol'nikov, and Iakovlev testified that they were approached by German and Japanese officials who told them about Trotsky's collaboration with their countries. This would seem to rule out any possibility that Trotsky was simply "bragging" to enhance his reputation among his followers and within the conspiracy generally. Nor is it just their word. From his very first confession Bukharin confirmed Radek's contact with German intelligence.

Leon Sedov

Trotsky would not have conspired with either German or Japanese officials in writing. As we have discussed above, it was Bolshevik practice that such deeply secret matters should be communicated only orally. We cannot rule out the possibility that Trotsky himself could have met with German or Japanese representatives. But it seems most likely that he would have done so either chiefly or entirely through his son Leon Sedov. Sedov had the motive, means, and opportunity to be his father's main contact with German and Japanese representatives after 1929 when Trotsky left the USSR.

There is a good deal of suggestive evidence to support this hypothesis. Many of the men whose testimony about direct collaboration with Trotsky we have cited said they did so through Sedov. It was Sedov's address book containing the addresses of Trotskyists within the USSR that Getty found in the Harvard Trotsky archives (Getty *Trotsky*, 34 n.16). Twelve people – Gol'tsman, Ol'berg, Berman-Yurin, Piatakov, Shestov, Romm, Krestinsky, Rozengol'ts, Uritsky, Putna, Shnitman and Tukhachevsky – claimed that they were in contact with Trotsky entirely or mainly through Sedov.[9]

There is much evidence to suggest that in early 1937 Hitler was expecting a pro-German military *coup* in the USSR.[10] Powerful military figures would have represented the best chance of overthrowing the Soviet regime and bringing Trotsky back.

The "Tukhachevsky Affair" military men were tried and executed in June 1937. We have studied their confessions of collaboration with Trotsky above. It may have been the destruction of this last

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[9] Romm, Krestinsky, and Bessonov claim to have also met Trotsky personally. Some of these men also claimed contact with Trotsky by letter.

[10] See Grover Furr, "New Light on Old Stories about Marshal Tukhachevskii: Some Documents Reconsidered." *Russian History / Histoire Russe* 13, 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1986) 293-308; at http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/tukh.html . We discuss the Mastny-Benes note in the Moscow Trials section of *Trotsky's 'Amalgams.'*

and best opportunity to return to the USSR that impelled Trotsky to send the telegram that we examined in an earlier chapter. Shortly after this, in July 1937 Zborowski noted Sedov's descent into drunkenness, gambling, and womanizing, and his declaration to Zborowski that all was lost. Such behavior is consistent with the hypothesis that Sedov's behavior reflected the final collapse of his and his father's hopes. Zborowski, who worked very closely with Sedov, had not reported any such behavior at any earlier date.[11]

Evidence and Proof

Many people believe – mistakenly – that in historical study there must be "proof beyond a reasonable doubt" for any conclusion to be justified. This is incorrect.

In historical study the job of an historian is to formulate hypotheses in order to account for the evidence that exists. The only scientific – in the sense of objective, rational, and intellectually defensible – way to determine the truth is to find the hypothesis that best accounts for all the evidence at hand and without cherry-picking it.

The conclusion will not be "certain." I use the scare quotes deliberately because there is seldom, if ever, "certainty" in any human endeavor. For example, there is no "certainty" in criminal investigation and prosecution, with which historical research is often compared and confused.

In a criminal trial the jury is supposed to be instructed to find a defendant "not guilty" unless the evidence proves him guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt." This is an attempt to avoid depriving an innocent defendant of liberty, property, rights, or life, even though

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[11] For this document see *Trotsky's 'Amalgams,'* 516-517. Trotsky's followers long believed that the NKVD caused Sedov's death on February 16, 1938, in a Paris clinic where he had undergone an appendectomy. But Zborowski's reports, confirmed by Costello and Tsarev and seconded by the memoirs of Pavel Sudoplatov who later oversaw the planning of Trotsky's assassination, all suggest that the NKVD had nothing to do with Sedov's death (Costello 1993, 283-4; Sudoplatov 1997, 95-6).

it risks exonerating a guilty defendant – something felt to be less odious.

We historians have a more pleasant job. None of the subjects of our investigations have their rights, life, or liberty at stake. All our subjects are dead, and dead people have none of the same kind of rights as the living, and certainly no life or liberty to lose. In historical investigation we can safely more closely approach the truth according to the hypothesis that best accounts for all the evidence we have. This is the only objective manner to most closely approximate the truth.

The historian must strive to be objective. This means, first and foremost, to act in a way so as to compensate for her or his own biases and preconceived ideas. Objectivity – the goal of all scientific investigation, including historical study – is an attitude of distrust of the self. Everyone has biases and preconceived ideas, and it is impossible to simply "shed" them. Instead, the historian must take active steps to subject her/his own biases and preconceived ideas to special doubt. He/she must "lean over backwards," as it were, to give an especially generous reading to evidence that appears to *contradict* his/her own preconceived ideas and biases. Likewise, he/she must subject to special doubt and suspicion any evidence that tends to *support* h is/her own biases and preconceived ideas.

In the present investigation the only hypothesis that accounts for the evidence we now have is that Leon Trotsky really did collaborate with the Japanese. This will not disturb those readers who have no particular biases or preconceived ideas in play. Nor will it long trouble those historically-savvy readers who are accustomed to questioning their own preconceived ideas and are excited at the discovery of new results.

It will not trouble those students of history who welcome the fact that historical study is "disillusioning" – that it challenges one to shed one's illusions, to question received viewpoints, to change one's mind, to grow intellectually by facing the implications of truths that they did not know before and may find unpleasant. This

kind of excitement and satisfaction is well known to scholars in the physical and biological sciences, as well as to many historians, when new truths and new paradigms overturn old ones.

The present study poses an interesting challenge to the many readers who are committed to the position that the Moscow Trials were frame-ups. It poses a particular challenge to Trotskyists. As with any historical study, those who have strongly held preconceived ideas that clash with the results of this study will be tempted to question this study but not to question their own biases and commitments. This is a methodological error. It is a lack of objectivity. It is in contradiction to materialism itself. Materialists base their decisions about truth or falsehood upon evidence, not upon their own preferences—what they "would like the truth to be."

A great many people do not know how to be objective, to question their own biases, to sincerely consider hypotheses and evidence that suggest that their own preconceived ideas are in error and should be abandoned. There is far too little commitment to objectivity. This is nowhere more obvious than on the Left, where ancient battles still rage while vast amounts of new primary source evidence go largely ignored.

Those who are committed not to an objective search for the truth but to their subjective preconceptions, either out of bias or from ignorance of proper historical methodology, will not be "convinced" by the results of this study. But "convincing" people is not the goal of historical study. Or, rather, the reader I aim to convince is the one whom I have described above: the reader who is excited by the search for new knowledge; who is not afraid to admit that she/he does not already know the truth; who does not fear to confront her/his own ignorance but wishes to shrink the boundaries of that ignorance; the one who wants to learn something that she/he did not know before and even thought was not possible – that reader will benefit from this study, as will the entire field of Soviet history.

Deciding On The Basis of the Evidence

Given the evidence available today there is only one objective conclusion: that our hypothesis has been confirmed. The evidence forces us to conclude that Leon Trotsky did collaborate with German and Japanese officials to help him return to power in the Soviet Union. There is no basis to disregard this or to regard the evidence we have reviewed in this paper as faked, obtained by torture, or fraudulent in any other respect.

Deciding according to the evidence demands that we accept the permanently contingent nature of our conclusion. Any objective assessment of the evidence for this, or any other historical conclusion, must always be provisional. If and when new evidence is produced we must be prepared to adjust or even to abandon this conclusion if warranted by that new evidence. Historical study knows no such thing as "certainty."

By the same token the evidence compels us to conclude that Trotsky did conspire with the Hitler and Japanese militarist regimes to help him overthrow the Soviet government and Communist Party leaders in order to regain power in the Soviet Union.

Bibliography and Primary Source Documents

To include a complete bibliography and the important primary source documents in this book would make it approximately seventy pages longer.

Therefore, I have put both of these resources on line at the following URL

http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/research/trotskyvol2.html

The errata and corrigenda may also be downloaded there.

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To Grover Furr, *Leon Trotsky's Collaboration with Germany and Japan*

Pages 1-9: **Confessions about Rakovsky.**

Lubianka 1937-1938 No. 11 pp. 56-60.

Russian text online at http://istmat.info/node/29655

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http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/60982

Pages 10-17: **Trotsky's 'Prediction' About Rakovsky. Rakovsky's Testimony at Trial, March 4 – 5, 1938.**

1938 Trial, pp. 289-295.

Pages 18 -61: **Serov's Letter concerning the "Bukharin Trial."**

Protsess Bukharina 1938 g. Ed. Zh. V. Artamonova, N.V. Petrov. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi Fond Demokratiia, Steven Cohen and Katrina Vanden Heuvel Fund, 2012, pp. 832-858.

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Confessions about Rakovsky

Special communication of N.I. Ezhov to J.V. Stalin Concerning Kh. G. Rakovsky with appendix of excerpts from confessions concerning his case.

Jan. 25 1937 No. 55464

Urgent – Top Secret

To Secretary of the CC VKP(b) comr. Stalin

According to materials from agents and investigations RAKOVSKY Kh. G. has remained until the present one of the active members of the counterrevolutionary Trotskyist-Zinovievist terrorist organization. According to confessions of PIATAKOV and MILL' (Okun') he had an independent line of contact with TROTSKY (and has effected this contact through ROSMER).

During exile in Barnaul until April 1934, having extremely hostile positions towards the VKP(b) and its leadership RAKOVSKY maintained counterrevolutionary organizational contact with the active members of the Trotskyist organization IUDKIS, PLISO, KASPAROVA, O. SMIRNOVA, et. al. RAKOVSKY knew of the existence of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist bloc, who was in it, and their terrorist activities (from the confessions of GAVEN, TER-VAGANIAN, ESTERMAN). According to confessions by KASPAROVA, NIKOLAEV, and ESTERMAN, RAKOVSKY's renunciation of Trotskyism was insincere at Trotsky's instigation and he remained as before in a position of active struggle against the leadership of the VKP(b).

KASPAROVA confessed that "the bloc of the Trotskyist and Zinovievist organizations was based upon the recognition of terrorist methods of struggle against the leadership of the VKP(b)" – she was informed of this by RAKOVSKY.

In 1934-35 RAKOVSKY was in contact with the secret Trotskyist POLLIAKOV, who several times brought TROTSKY'S bulletin from abroad for I.N. SMIRNOV.

In April 1935 RAKOVSKY gave to one of his agents the platform of the Trotskyists and two documents published illegally by the Trotskyists in 1928, for safekeeping.

According to materials from agents in the Main Directorate of State Security it is apparent that in May 1935 RAKOVSKY transmitted through KARMANENKO a directive "to remain intact until the moment of international complications which will inevitably occur in the near future."

In May of the same year, 1935, we know of a meeting between RAKOVSKY and a certain DAVIDSON who arrived from the USA and COUTS who came from London.

While in Moscow RAKOVSKY continuously maintained close ties with the Trotskyists PREOBRAZHENSKII, SOSNOVSKII, VINOGRADSKAIA, SOSNOVSKAIA, DANISHEVSKII and CHERNOBORODOV. The arrested terrorist NIKOLAEV – former worker of the Krestintern and member of the CC CP(b)U confessed that during a meeting with RAKOVSKY in Moscow in 1935, "RAKOVSKY surprised him (NIKOLAEV) with his hostility" against comr. STALIN. RAKOVSKY was glad to hear NIKOLAEV's report about his meeting with I.N. SMIRNOV and asked for information about DROBNIS and RAFAEL.

"For his part RAKOVSKY promised his full support in any Trotskyist work. I considered it necessary to verify with RAKOVSKY the facts communicated to me by DREITSER about the work of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist center, who was on it, and also who was in the Moscow center. RAKOVSKY confirmed all of this to me, and also confirmed the membership of the especially clandestine center." (from NIKOLAEV's confession of December 30, 1936).

NIKOLAEV's second meeting with RAKOVSKY took place at the beginning of 1936.

"At this meeting RAKOVSKY very concretely and frankly gave me clear directions concerning the development of Trotskyist work in a warlike spirit, since 'each of STALIN's blows against the

Trotskyists must be answered by a counterstroke.'" (From NIKOLAEV"s confession of December 30, 1936).

At an interrogation on December 20, 1936 PIATAKOV confessed that at his personal meeting with TROTSKY in Oslo in 1935 TROTSKY told PIATAKOV that it was essential to meet with RAKOVSKY and tell him that he had to become more active. Said PIATAKOV, "I concluded from this that RAKOVSKY had some kind of special way of communicating with TROTSKY."

On January 25 of this year the accused DROBNIS confessed at trial that he was aware from the words of MURALOV that RAKOVSKY had his own direct Trotskyist lines of communication and definitely knew "about the new tactics, Trotsky's new directives concerning terror and diversion."

I consider that it is imperative that RAKOVSKY be arrested. I request your permission.

People's Commissar for Internal Affairs of the USSR N. EZHOV

APPENDIX: Excerpts from confessions in 6 pages.

EXCERPT FROM TRANSCRIPT OF INTERROGATION OF KASPAROVA of 9/21, 10/27, and 11/5 1936

That the bloc of the Trotskyist and Zinovievist organizations had at its basis the mutual acceptance of terrorist methods of struggle against the leadership of the VKP(b) I learned from Kh. G. RAKOVSKY.

RAKOVSKY informed about this in a coded letter in Saratov in 1933 not long before my arrest.

I cannot relate the exact contents of Kh.G. RAKOVSKY's letter but I recall that in this letter, in a very few sentences, Kh.G. RAKOVSKY informed me that the basis of the bloc was the mutual terrorist activity of the Trotskyists and the Zinovievists against the leadership of the VKP(b) and, evidently knowing from I.N. SMIRNOV

about my negative attitude towards terrorist methods of struggle, that there was no other way to change the leadership of the VKP(b) and, consequently, to change the regime. The letter ended with a communication of the members of the center of the bloc – ZINOVIEV, KAMENEV, SMIRNOV, and MRACHKOVSKII.

I am aware that during the whole period of his exile RAKOVSKY took a very hostile attitude in relation to the VKP(b) and its leadership.

The letters and directives that RAKOVSKY issued in rather large numbers were distinguished by their hostility to the Party's line, oriented Trotskyists towards denying that the USSR was a dictatorship of the proletariat, gave the direct order to form a second party and led, as I have confessed, to directive concerning the transition to terror in the struggle against the Party leadership.

RAKOVSKY was considered by all of us as TROTSKY's "man in charge" in the USSR and since we knew about RAKOVSKY's contact with TROTSKY, which took place through I.N. SMIRNOV, we accepted all directives issued by him as TROTSKY's directives.

RAKOVSKY carried on a very intensive correspondence in code with the exiles and the political isolators. With the Saratov Trotskyist organization RAKOVSKY carried on this correspondence in the main through OL'GA SMIRNOVA. Documents were transmitted to him in the bindings of books.

I know that all the work of organizing a printing press and reproducing Trotskyist documents in the Kursk Trotskyist organization was carried out with RAKOVSKY's knowledge and permission. Active contact between him and Trotskyists who arrived in Barnaul was also conducted intensively.

I recall that in 1932 the Trotskyists PLIS used to come. He brought to us from RAKOVSKY an illegal document titled "Dictatorship is an Abstraction."

At the end of 1933 IUDKIS was coming to RAKOVSKY from the center of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist bloc.

RAKOVSKY's declaration of renunciation was a complete surprise to me..., his renunciation was a maneuver.

His renunciation of Trotskyism was effected by RAKOVSKY on the direct instructions of TROTSKY. The exiled Trotskyist MAKNIVEL'SON informed me about this in Alma-Ata.

Accurately [transcribed]

Authorized agent, 4th Section, Main Directorate of State Security

Jr. Lieutenant of State Security EFREMOV

EXCERPT FROM TRANSCRIPT OF INTERROGATION

of PIATAKOV December 19-20 1936

"We arrived at an airport near Oslo and from there drove by automobile to a cottage where I met with Trotsky in a private apartment. The meeting lasted no more than two hours.

I should add that among the individual persons whose names TROTSKY mentioned during our talk RADEK, SOKOL'NIKOV, RAKOVSKY and others were mentioned.

Concerning RAKOVSKY TROTSKY said that it was essential to talk with him and give him a push in his work along the lines of the Trotskyist organization. From this I deduced that RAKOVSKY had some personal line of contact with TROTSKY.

After the meeting with TROTSKY I intended to meet with RAKOVSKY and pass TROTSKY'S instructions on to him, but this meeting never occurred."

Accurately [transcribed]

Authorized agent, 4th Section, Main Directorate of State Security

Jr. Lieutenant of State Security EFREMOV

EXCERPT FROM TRANSCRIPT OF INTERROGATION

of NIKOLAEV from December 30, 1936

"After the return of I.N. SMIRNOV from abroad in 1932 he informed me that he had meetings with L. SEDOV and gave me a direct order about the necessity of restoring organizational contacts with the former active Trotskyists and developing activity.

Already then, in 1932, I N. SMIRNOV had received a directive from TROTSKY through SEDOV concerning the development of terrorist activity against the leaders of the VKP(b).

In carrying out this directive I began to reestablish my contacts with the active Trotskyists RAKOVSKY, DROBNIS, BOGUSLAVSKII and others. Talks with all these persons on political subjects convinced me that they were all prepared and were all fully firm in their conviction for active work against the Party.

To my question about how to understand RAKOVSKY's _renegade renunciation DREITSER informed me "that all this was done with TROTSKY'S agreement."

RAKOVSKY's renunciation was for strategic purposes while he maintained his old political convictions and he, RAKOVSKY, was even a member of the especially secret center. He [DREITSER] named as members, in addition to RAKOVSKY, PIATAKOV, SOKOL'NIKOV, and K. RADEK. This center exists in the event of the failure of the active center of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist center of the bloc. E. DREITSER suggested that I establish close organizational contact with it.

When AKIRTAVA asked me about things in Moscow and with whom in the Trotskyist leadership I was in contact I informed him about the situation in Moscow and that I maintained contact with RAKOVSKY.

I told AKIRTAVA that RAKOVSKY was a member of the especially secret center whose membership consists of, besides RAKOVSKY, PIATAKOV, K. RAADEK and SOKOL'NIKOV, just as E. DREITSER had told me and as RAKOVSKY himself had at one time confirmed.

My meeting with RAKOVSKY took place during the summer of 1935 in Moscow, upon his return from Barnaul, near the post office. Having learned about my arrest in 1933 he was interested in who was in the political isolator, about their state of mind, and about my intentions about returning to the Party. To this I answered that I did not intend to return to the Party again.

I had always known RAKOVSKY to be a person hostile to STALIN and to the current Party leadership, but at our last meeting he surprised even me with his hostility against STALIN. Here he specifically emphasized that they were hindering him in the People's Commissariat of Health and did not allow him to utilize his abilities. In a word the fellow almost stated directly that he had counted on something bigger when he wrote his false declaration that he had moved to the Party's political positions.

For this reason he was especially satisfied at my information about my meeting with I.N. SMIRNOV during my exile. He asked about DROBNIS and whether I was in contact with RAFAIL.

On his part RAKOVSKY promised all his support in any Trotskyist work. He also informed me that he maintained regular contact with PIATAKOV.

I considered it necessary to verify through RAKOVSKY the facts about the work of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist center told to me by DREITSER, about the members of the center, and also of the Moscow center. RAKOVSKY confirmed all of this to me, and also confirmed the membership of the especially secret center.

At this meeting RAKOVSKY very concretely and frankly gave me clear directions concerning the development of Trotskyist work in a warlike spirit, since "each of STALIN's blows against the Trotskyists must be answered by a counterstroke." RAKOVSKY suggested that I maintain regular contact with him."

Accurately [transcribed]

Authorized agent, 4th Section, Main Directorate of State Security

Junior Lieutenant of State Security EFREMOV

AP RF. F. 3. Op. 24. D. 276. L. 15-73. Original. Typewritten

On the first page there is the handwritten note: “Arch. St.”

Trotsky's 'Prediction' About Rakovsky

Rakovsky's Testimony at Trial

We have examined all the other evidence relating to Rakovsky's confession concerning the Japanese government and Trotsky. It remains to study Rakovsky's version as given in his trial testimony on March 4 and 5, 1938.

In September 1934 I was sent to Tokyo at the head of the Soviet Red Cross Delegation to an international conference of Red Cross Societies, which was to take place there in October. The day after I arrived in Tokyo, I was stopped in the corridor of the Japanese Red Cross building by a certain prominent public man of Japan. I can mention his name.

THE PRESIDENT: No, there is no need.

RAKOVSKY: Very well, I will name him at the session in camera. He invited me to tea. I made his acquaintance. He held a position which had some relation to my mission. I want to say, not my mission as one who belonged to the opposition, but my governmental mission. I accepted his amiable invitation. During the conversation this person (here I omit various compliments, commonplaces, flattering remarks) said that the interests of the political trend to which I belonged in the U.S.S.R. and the interests of a certain government fully coincided, and that he personally welcomed my arrival in Tokyo because it would give him the opportunity to discuss certain questions concerning both sides; and in particular, he declared that for a certain government and for himself my estimate of the political situation in the Soviet Union would be of extraordinary value.

I must say that I did not anticipate a conversation like this, it took me unawares. I said that, firstly, I was not, nor did I belong to or take any part in the leading circles of my country. I now occupied a very modest position, a modest

post in the People's Commissariat of Public Health, and unfortunately, in this connection I could not be of any service to them. I evaded further conversation and left.

I am giving you the gist of it, of course, without vouching for every word. I wanted to ascertain the motives which prompted such a proposal. The same evening I had a talk with the Ambassador, Yurenev, whom I had known as a Trotskyite ever since 1926, when I spent a summer with him in the south of France at Saint-Jean-de-Luz. I told him of the rather strange words of the person I have mentioned. I am representing it in a somewhat more pointed form, because usually such things are wrapped up in a lot of verbiage without any pretext for protest being given. I told Yurenev that the idea here was to enlist me as a spy, as an informer for a certain government.

Then Yurenev drew a letter from his pocket and told me: 'The question is decided, there is no need to hesitate." He even said: "The die is cast." He showed me Pyatakov's letter, which I myself had brought him from Moscow. It was sent to me under such circumstances that I could not know its contents.

I must tell you that when I arrived in Moscow after sending my statement to the Party, I immediately went for a cure. Then I came back, started work, and in two months left for Tokyo. During this time I had the opportunity to see only Sosnovsky, and went twice on business to the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, where I met Krestinsky, with whom I exchanged a few words. I will speak of this later. But on the whole this was the period when I was trying to get back into the Party and in general avoided any meetings with known oppositionists.

Just before my departure I received by messenger of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry an envelope addressed to me in the People's Commissariat of Health. In this envelope there was a second envelope, addressed to Yurenev, and a note for me. The note was from Pyatakov. In this note he congratulated me on my return and asked me to

take the letter to Yurenev and insist on Yurenev's compliance with his request. The letter was not coded. The contents of this letter related to the methods used in Japan for making alloys of non-ferrous metals; Pyatakov asked Yurenev to let him know what methods were used there and at the same time to send him literature on the subject available in Japan in English and German. But when after my conversation with the well-known public man I have mentioned Yurenev drew this letter from his pocket, besides the unencoded text there was another text which had been written in invisible ink. Then Yurenev read to me first of all what concerned me. Pyatakov had written to him: Rakovsky, apart from his ill health, has another reason for being cautious; this is his desire to get back into the Party; so that in this sense we must spare him, but as far as possible utilize his stay in Tokyo. Then came literally the following phrase: "It is likely that a certain government will itself take steps in this direction" (that is, in the direction of utilizing Rakovsky). Further Pyatakov wrote to Yurenev about Bogomolov, the Ambassador in China, pointing out that a certain government was dissatisfied with his political line, that he was helping Great Britain more than he was the said government.

Further it was pointed out that Yurenev must try to make all possible use of Sabanin, the director of the legal department of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, while he was in Tokyo. Finally, Yurenev said, reading the letter: "But this is what I find difficult to do." The letter contained instructions that he must take advantage of the well-known negotiations concerning the sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway so that something might accrue to the benefit of the Trotskyites.

I have told you approximately the contents of Pyatakov's letter to Yurenev. Yurenev was connected with the Trotskyite underground in Moscow, with Pyatakov.

On the second or third day after my conversation with Yurenev, after a certain banquet to which all the delegates

to the Red Cross Conference had been invited, at the end of the dinner somebody approached me and said that a certain personage of high standing, present at this dinner, wished to make my acquaintance.

The official personage stated that he was very pleased to make my acquaintance, etc. Then he went on to say that our interests coincided with the interests of a certain state, that an agreement had been reached between the Trotskyites in the U.S.S.R. and the representatives of a certain state, but that we did not know the exact terms of this agreement yet.

The prominent public man who had spoken to me did so, as I learnt, on the instructions of this high personage. After this I had two more meetings with the public man...

THE PRESIDENT: Excuse me, accused Rakovsky. Seeing that it is now ten o'clock and your evidence will last another hour at least, you will conclude tomorrow.

The Court is adjourned until 11 a.m.

MORNING SESSION, MARCH 5, 1938

COMMANDANT OF THE COURT: The Court is coming, please rise.

THE PRESIDENT: Please be seated. The session is resumed. Accused Rakovsky, you may conclude your evidence.

RAKOVSKY: Yesterday I concluded with the statement that, after my conversation with the high personage who was close to the Japanese government, I had three talks with the public man of whom I have spoken, the man at the head of a big public organization in Japan.

During the second and third meeting with the public man who headed a big public organization in Japan we established the nature of the information which I promised to supply to the agents of the Japanese intelligence service in Moscow and also the technique of transmitting this information. While still in Tokyo, I drew into this work Dr. Naida, secretary of the Red Cross Delegation, of whom I

already knew that he was a member of the underground counter-revolutionary terrorist organization. I sent Dr. Naida with my card to the public man and he arranged with him as ^to how and with whom Dr. Naida was to meet in Moscow; it was he who acted as liaison agent between me and the Japanese intelligence service. In Tokyo I had yet another meeting, with a third person. All such international conferences, as you probably know, are accompanied by all kinds of receptions, dinners, shows, meetings, which usually serve as a background for very serious conversations, quite legitimate, but sometimes not legitimate, I have in mind recruiting for various purposes. I was introduced to this third person by the second high personage. He asked me to take coffee with him -- this was after dinner; we sat down at a table and began to talk.

I shall not reproduce the whole conversation, and it is not necessary either; I shall give it to you in substance. He started the conversation by saying: "We are aware that you are a very close friend and adherent of Mr. Trotsky. I must ask you to write to him that a certain government is dissatisfied with his articles on the Chinese question and also with the behaviour of the Chinese Trotskyites. We have a right to expect a different line of conduct on the part of Mr. Trotsky. Mr. Trotsky ought to understand what is necessary for the certain government. There is no need to go into details, but it is clear that an incident provoked in China would be a desirable pretext for intervening in China." I wrote to Trotsky about all this—about my negotiations in Tokyo, about my conversations with Yurenev, about my meetings, and, of course, about this last proposition.

I also kept Yurenev informed of all my talks. During the last week I fell ill owing to an inflammation of the veins of my right leg, and I stayed in the Embassy. I am mentioning this because it gave me and Yurenev an opportunity to see more of each other. He would come to me—the other members of the delegation were, of course, away at such times—he would come to me and we would talk about our common

Trotskyite affairs. Yurenev was very much worried by one circumstance. "We have gotten," he said, "into such a mess that sometimes one does not know how to behave. One is afraid that by satisfying one of our partners we may offend another. For instance, here at present, antagonism is arising between Great Britain and Japan in connection with the Chinese question, while we have to maintain connections both with the British and Japanese intelligence services"...

VYSHINSKY: Who do you mean, "we"?

RAKOVSKY: The Trotskyites. "The Moscow centre, in this case Pyatakov, is complaining that Bogomolov is taking the side of the British. And here I have to find my bearings in all this."... I told him: you are exaggerating the difficulty of your position. What do we have to proceed from? We Trotskyites have to play three cards at the present moment: the German, Japanese and British. It was not quite clear to me, at that time at least, what the German card promised. Personally I thought that the possibility was not excluded that Hitler would seek a rapprochement with the government of the U.S.S.R. I cited the policy of Richelieu: in his own country he exterminated the Protestants, while in his foreign policy he concluded alliances with the Protestant German princes. The relations between Germany and Poland were still in the stage of their inception at the time. Japan, on the other hand, was a potent aggressor against the U.S.S.R. For us Trotskyites the Japanese card was extremely important, but, on the other hand, we should not overrate the importance of Japan as our ally against the Soviet government. Even if Japanese aggression could force its way into the territory of the U.S.S.R., it would be lost in the vast spaces, and in the taiga. As for Great Britain, the situation was rather more serious. At that moment Great Britain was antagonistic to Japan. I am telling you about our private conversations which ought to show why we pursued one line or another. At the moment there was antagonism between ourselves and Japan, but it should not be forgotten that England once

headed a coalition against the French Revolution and fought on for twenty-five years.

THE PRESIDENT: You should dwell less on the past and speak more about the Trotskyite organization.

RAKOVSKY: Thus, the conclusion was that it was necessary to maintain the connection with the British Intelligence Service, but to pay attention to the Japanese intelligence service at the present time.

VYSHINSKY: I did not quite get you. You say: it was necessary to maintain the connection with the British Intelligence Service and to pay attention to the Japanese intelligence service.

RAKOVSKY: To pay the main attention.

VYSHINSKY: Hence, to serve both the Japanese and British intelligence services, and in addition also the German.

RAKOVSKY: According to my personal opinion at the time, this latter was a mere prospect.

VYSHINSKY: From Krestinsky's evidence you saw that it was not a mere prospect.

What intelligence services were you personally connected with?

RAKOVSKY: The British and the Japanese.

VYSHINSKY: And Krestinsky? Accused Krestinsky, what intelligence service were you connected with?

KRESTINSKY: The German.

VYSHINSKY: Prospectively or actually?

KRESTINSKY: Actually.

VYSHINSKY: Actually? Proceed, please.

RAKOVSKY: I returned from Tokyo with the credentials of a Japanese spy in my pocket. In my present state of mind I do not find it difficult to say so openly, to admit openly before the people's Court what formerly I would not bring myself to admit to my own conscience. It took me a short time, only a few months one might say, to consummate that evolution

of Trotskyism which it took other Trotskyites several years to consummate. (1938 Trial, 289-295)

Serov's Letter concerning the Bukharin Trial

From *Protsess Bukharina 1938 g.* Ed. Zh. V. Artamonova, N.V. Petrov. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi Fond Demokratiia, Steven Cohen and Katrina Vanden Heuvel Fund, 2012.

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Report of I.A. Serov, Chairman of the Committee of State Security [KGB] attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Concerning the Trial in the Case of the "Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites."

July 7 1956

Top secret

To Comrade V.M. MOLOTOV.

I hereby present to you the report concerning the questions outlined in the protocol of the Commission of the CC of the CPSU of July 2 1956.

I. Serov

July 7 1956. No. 1687-C

Report Concerning the Materials in the Case of the Antisoviet "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites."

The origins of the case

In the case of the anti-Soviet "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" the following persons were brought to justice sentenced by the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court:

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1) BUKHARIN Nikolai Ivanovich

2) /RYKOV, Aleksei Ivanovich

3) IAGODA, Genrikh Grigor'evich

4) KRESTINSKII Nikolai Nikolaevich

5) ROZENGOL'TS Arkady Pavlovich

6) IVANOV Vladimir IVANOVich

7) CHERNOV Mikhail Aleksandrovich

8) GRIN'KO Grigorii Fedorovich

9) PESHKOV Isaac Abramovich

10) IKRAMOV Akmal'

11) KHODZHAEV Faizulla

12) SHARANGOVICH Vassilii Fomich

13) ZUBAREV Prokopii Timofeevich

14) BULANOV Pavel Petrovich

15) LEVIN Lev Grivor'evich

16) KAZAKOV Ignatii Nikolaevich

17) MAKSIMOV-DIKOVSKII Veniamin Adamovich (Abramovich)

18) KRIUCHKOV Petr Petrovich

to the supreme criminal punishment – execution by shooting;

19) PLETNEV Dmitrii Dmitrievich - to 25 years in prison;

20) RAKOVSKY Khristian Georgievich - to 20 years in prison and

21) BESSONOV Sergei Alekseevich - to 15 years in prison.

As can be seen from the materials of the case, before the arrests of BUKHARIN N. I., RYKOV A.I., KRESTINSKII N.N. and others, the organs of the NKVD and of the USSR Prosecutor's Office did not possess any verified facts on organized activities of these individuals and on the existence of a so-called "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites."

The confessions of ZINOVIEV, KAMENEV, SOKOL'NIKOV and REINGOL'D that was available at that time concerning the criminal activity of BUKHARIN and RYKOV were rejected by the USSR Prosecutor's Office as unreliable. A. Ia. Vyshinskii, Prosecutor of the USSR, conducted a special investigation and concluded that there was no evidence against BUKHARIN and RYKOV, and in this connection on 23 September 1936 he sent for approval to J.V. STALIN a draft resolution concerning the cessation of criminal proceedings against BUKHARIN and RYKOV that had arisen on the basis of materials in the trial of the "Trotskyite-Zinovievite Center."

However, after that the NKVD began a storm of activity to collect new "evidence" of the existence of organized anti-Soviet activity on the part of the Rights and, in particular, by BUKHARIN, RYKOV and TOMSKII. During December 1937 — February 1938 participants in the so-called BUKHARIN "school" were arrested and confessions by ASTROV, TSEITLIN, ALEXANDROV and others appeared. At the same time RADEK, already convicted in another case, began to testify against BUKHARIN, RYKOV and TOMSKII.

Once they had become acquainted with the materials brought against them, BUKHARIN and RYKOV categorically denied any guilt in the conduct of anti-Soviet activities. They acknowledged only that in 1928-1929 they had fought against the party's general line but insisted that in recent

years they had sincerely supported the party leadership and had no fundamental differences with it. In denying his guilt BUKHARIN, in particular, pointed out serious contradictions and absurdities in the

testimony of those arrested and requested that a special commission of inquiry be appointed to verify them.

In February 1937, after EZHOV'S report to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), BUKHARIN and RYKOV were arrested.

Somewhat earlier RAKOVSKY Kh. G. had been arrested on a criminal charge.

In a special communication to J.V. STALIN, asking for his consent to arrest RAKOVSKY, the NKVD of the USSR pointed out that he had been exposed as one of the active participants of the Trotsky-Zinoviev terrorist organization .by the testimony of PIATAKOV, KASPAROVA, NIKOLAEV, TER-VAGANIAN and others, as well as by material from undercover agents.

In fact, there were no materials in the possession of the NKVD from agents concerning criminal activities by RAKOVSKY, while the confessions of the above-named persons were vague and uncertain in their reliability.

Thus, TER-VAGANIAN, citing SMIRNOV I.N., confessed that in 1932 RAKOVSKY "wrote a new counterrevolutionary document." But there were no confessions by SMIRNOV along these lines.

The prisoner NIKOLAEV gave vague confessions that RAKOVSKY belonged to a reserve "especially secret center" consisting of PIATAKOV, SOKOL' NIKOV and RADEK, about which he supposedly learned from DREITSER. However, none of the individuals named by NIKOLAEV stated this in their testimony.

KASPAROVA confessed that RAKOVSKY hypocritically announced his departure from the opposition, but in reality did not break with it and in 1933, outlining his anti-Soviet views, informed her in his letters about the creation on a terrorist basis of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc.

To RAKOVSKY's case was also attached an excerpt from the testimony of PIATAKOV in which it is stated that "RAKOVSKY has

his own line of contact with TROTSKY." In reality PIATAKOV did not give any such testimony.

From March to May 1937 BESSONOV S.A., ZUBAREV P.T., IAGODA G.G., BULANOV P.P. and KRESTINSKII N.N. were arrested.

Concerning BESSONOV there were confessions by BUKHARTSEV that he had recruited BESSONOV in 1936 into the Trotskyist organization, as well as testimony by KUSHNER that had characterized BESSONOV as "unexposed enemy of the party", who had permitted slander against the leaders of the CPSU(b).

Against ZUBAREV before his arrest, according to the materials attached to the case, there were confessions by YULIN, MEDNIKOV and ELKOVICH. They named him as one of the leaders of the counterrevolutionary organization in the Urals.

It has not been possible to establish from the case file what materials served as the basis for the arrest of KRESTINSKII, BULANOV and IAGODA.

Between October and December 1937 on the testimony of IAGODA KRIUCHKOV and LEVIN were arrested on the basis of LEVIN'S testimony.

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PLETNEV, KAZAKOV and MAKSIMOV-DIKOVSKII were arrested at the same time. They were accused of the villainous murders of V.V.KUIBYSHEV, V.R MENZHINSKII, M. GOR'KII and his son, M.A. PESHKOV.

ZELENSKII I.A., SHARANGOVICH V.F., GRIN'KO G.F., IKRAMOV A. and KHODZHAEV F., who were also defendants in the case under review, were arrested between July and September 1937.

The grounds for the arrest of ZELINSKII were the confessions of the accused LOBOV and KOMAROV (both rehabilitated at the present time) that he had attended anti-Soviet gatherings of members of the organization of Rights.

With respect to SHARANGOVICH there were in fact only the confessions of RACHITSKII, who named him among the members of an anti-Soviet organization.

KHODZHAEV was arrested on the basis of confessions of RYSKULOV and RYKOV.

RYSKULOV testified that in 1930 he and KHODZHAEV joined the anti-Soviet pan-Turkic center, which later established contact with the organization of the Rights and endorsed their terrorist plans. But RYKOV said of KHODZHAEV that he "more or less" sympathized with the Rights.

At the time of IKRAMOV'S arrest there were confessions of ANTIPOV, RUMIANTSEV (both rehabilitated), BUKHARIN, IRMATOV and BALTABAEV that he was one of the leaders of the anti-Soviet nationalist organization in Uzbekistan.

In addition the prisoner APRESOV confessed that as an agent of British intelligence he learned in 1932 about the involvement of IKRAMOV with British intelligence.

In October and November 1937 ROZENGOL'TS A.P., CHERNOV M.A. and IVANOV V.I. were arrested

LOGANOVSKII and RAKOVSKY had confessed about ROZENGOL'TS before his arrest.

LOGANOVSKII asserted that ROZENGOL'TS, as People's Commissar of Foreign Trade, maintained suspicious contacts with representatives of the Polish Embassy in Moscow and conducted sabotage activities in the field of foreign trade.

According to RAKOVSKY's testimony ROZENGOL'TS serves as an agent of British intelligence.

CHERNOV'S arrest was made on the basis of the confessions of RADCHENKO that since 1931 he had been "organizationally linked with the center of the Rights" and had been conducting sabotage

activities, and of statements by GALEVIUS and GAISTER that as Commissar of Agriculture CHERNOV had extended protection to participants of an organization of agricultural saboteurs.

Concerning IVANOV there were confessions of KAMINSKII and GOROKHOV, arrested in other cases, that they knew from the words of others about his belonging to the anti-Soviet organization of Rights, and the confession of SOBOLEV that in his presence IVANOV had made anti-Soviet statements.

II. The essence of the charges

BUKHARIN N.I., RYKOV A.I., IAGODA G.G. and the others involved in the present case were convicted of the following offenses:

1. On the instructions of foreign intelligence services they had organized a conspiratorial group called the "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" that set as its goal

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the overthrow of the existing Soviet socialist social and political system, the restoration in the USSR of capitalism and the power of the bourgeoisie, the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and the separation from it of the Ukraine , Belarus and the Central Asian republics, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Primorye in favor of foreign states;

2. Systematically engaged in espionage on behalf of foreign countries, providing their intelligence services with very important secret state information.

In particular, KRESTINSKII and CHERNOV were accused of belonging to the German intelligence services, ROZENGOL'TS to the German and British intelligence services, RAKOVSKY to the British and Japanese intelligence services, SHARANGOVICH to the Polish intelligence service and GRIN'KO to the Polish and German intelligence services;

3. Systematically organized and carried out acts of sabotage and diversion in various branches of industry, agriculture and transport;

4. Organized terrorist acts against S.M. KIROV, V.V.KUIBYSHEV, V.R MENZHINSKII, A. M.GOR'KII, his son, M.A. PESHKOV, and also attempted to accomplish the poisoning of EZHOV.

BUKHARIN, moreover, was found guilty in the fact that during the period of the conclusion of the Brest peace a group of so-called "Left" Communists headed by him, together with a group of TROTSKY's and of "Left" Socialist-Revolutionaries tried to disrupt the conclusion of the peace treaty, to arrest V.I. LENIN, Ia.M. SVERDLOV, and J.V. STALIN and form a new government of Bukharinists, Trotskyites and "Left" SRs.

During the preliminary investigation and the judicial proceedings in the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR all those arrested pleaded guilty to the charges against them.

III. / Analysis of investigative and intelligence materials /

In the course of the verification of the case against the members of the so-called "Anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" the investigative materials relating to the case have been studied as have agents' materials stored at the KGB of the USSR. At the same time all the accused who were brought to trial in the present case have been verified in the state historical archives and special archives where are stored materials of the Tsarist secret police and captured archives from the German, Polish and French intelligence and counterintelligence agencies.

All the accused convicted in the present case pleaded guilty to the charges against them. However, the verification process revealed that for the most part, these confessions had been made under compulsion and did not reflect the truth.

For example, RAKOVSKY Kh. G., who confessed his active participation in the "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" and his collaboration with Japanese and British Intelligence?

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services, after the trial repeatedly protested his innocence and claimed that during the investigation he was forced to give confessions known to be false. / Agent "Anri" / who was held together with RAKOVSKY in the Orel prison, reported on March 17, 1940 that RAKOVSKY:

"completely denies his guilt and considers everything that took place at the trial and in the investigation was nothing but a farce. Sometimes he casually asserted that he gave all his testimony under pressure "(Arch. case number 300956, v. 9, l.d.181 [=archival 'delo' number, volume number, page number])

Another, / agent "Dima" /, who was also with RAKOVSKY in the same cell, reported on April 2, 1941 that in conversations with him RAKOVSKY had categorically denied any involvement in the Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, said that his interrogation protocols had been falsified and then declared "I was indignant when ARONSON (investigator) wrote the protocol that stated that we wanted to restore capitalism. "Listen, -- I said – that is illiterate." He threw the crumpled protocol in my face. Generally, when I did not write the way they wanted me to, they always did that... "(ibid, l.d. 322)

Questioned on July 3, 1956 former employee of the NKVD ARONSON Ia.A. confirmed that the investigation against RAKOVSKY was indeed conducted in an atmosphere of serious violation of the norms of socialist legality.

After the trial RAKOVSKY, citing his advanced age and illness, repeatedly made applications in which he petitioned for clemency. However, RAKOVSKY's requests remained unsatisfied.

In this regard, on May 17, 1941 RAKOVSKY said to / agent "Finn" /: "I have decided to change my tactics. So far I have only asked for pardon, but have not written about my own case. Now I will write a statement calling for review of my case, with a description of all the "secrets of the Madrid court" — Soviet investigation. At least let the people through whose hands all statements pass know how exaggerated cases and trials are concocting out of personal political revenge. Even though I may soon die, even if I am a corpse, remember ... sometimes even corpses will begin to speak." (Arch. case number 300956, v. 9, l.d. 239-240)

RAKOVSKY's testimony about his alleged criminal activity is also refuted by the fact that the men he named in interrogations as his accomplices, GVAKHARIA, BABAYAN and SABANIN have now been rehabilitated and their cases closed. BOGOMOLOV, whom RAKOVSKY named as a member of a counterrevolutionary organization, pleaded not guilty at his trial.

During the investigation KRESTINSKII stated that he was an active participant in the "anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" and in October 1933 while on holiday abroad, with the assistance of BESSONOV had met with Leon TROTSKY and SEDOV in the city of Meran. During this meeting TROTSKY, according to KRESTINSKII, gave him a directive on the establishment in the Soviet Union of the combined forces of the Trotskyites, Rightists and military conspirators, the need to employ terror, sabotage, and subversion in the struggle, as well about the conclusion of agreements with foreign governments for the overthrow of the Soviet state system.

However, these confessions of KRESTINSKII'S are not supported by the operational materials of the Foreign Division of the NKVD, whose agents were monitoring TROTSKY abroad. In the archival documents of the Foreign Division of the NKVD there is no information about any visit by TROTSKY and SEDOV to Meran, nor is there any information about any meeting with KRESTINSKII at all.

After the publication of the materials of the trial TROTSKY declared to a correspondent of the newspaper "New York Herald Tribune" that he

."..had not had any relations with KRESTINSKII since 1927, and had not met, nor corresponded with him either directly or through a third party.

... he had never been to Meran and until he obtained the information today from his secretary had not known where this place was ..." (Arch. case number 13005, vol. 3, l.d.285)

BESSONOV, who had confirmed during interrogations that KRESTINSKII had met with TROTSKY and SEDOV in 1933 in Meran, declared after the trial that all his statements were false.

On May 6, 1939 / Agent "Blagin" /, who was confined with BESSONOV in Solovki prison, reported that BESSONOV responded about the trial of "anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" as follows:

"The whole trial is a complete invention of the NKVD. In reality none of the accused committed any crimes..." (Arch. case number 101492, Vol. 1 l.d. 27)

On September 29, 1939 another / agent "Nikitin" / reported:

"Concerning the trial of the center of Rights and Trotskyites (1938) BESSONOV said that it was all a complete swindle and a very crude falsification. That, for example, KRESTINSKII really did take money from the German government in 1922 and subsequent years and pass it on to TROTSKY, but that all this did not represent anything counter-revolutionary since, by the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was unable to train military officers on its territory so she conspired with the Soviet Union to organize several military schools in Kazan' and other cities of the USSR and paid money for this to KRESTINSKII, the envoy, for TROTSKY, who was Commissar for the Army and Navy. This was known among the circles of Party and Soviet leaders." (Arch. case number 101492, Vol. 2, l.d. 83-84)

On April 29, 1939 / agent "Grachev" / wrote about the same subject: "Describing the trial as a "farce," prisoner BESSONOV said that everything that the accused said at the trial was coerced testimony and in fact none of them had plotted anything against Soviet power. (ibid, vol. 1, l.d. 22)

During the process of verification other facts have also been obtained that give indisputable evidence that the testimony of KRESTINSKII and BESSONOV was false.

During the interrogation of October 28 1937 KRESTINSKII, for example, testified that participants in the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, in preparing the overthrow of the Soviet

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regime, discussed the formation of a new government in which they intended to include their accomplices: RUDZUTAK, ANTIPOV, AKULOV, LOBOV, UNSHLIKHT, KAMINSKII, BOLOTIN, KALMANOVICH, UKHANOV and ANTONOV-OVSEENKO.

These individuals were arrested and prosecuted on charges of organizing anti-Soviet activities. During 1955-1956 the cases against RUDZUTAK, ANTIPOV and the other persons named above were verified and terminated by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court for lack of evidence of criminal activity by the accused.

At the present time GAMARNIK, KNORIN, RUMIANTSEV, VEGER, and others about whom KRESTINSKII testified as "enemies of the people" have been rehabilitated.

In light of these facts the confessions of RAKOVSKY, KRESTINSKII and BESSONOV about the crimes allegedly committed by them cannot be considered truthful.

Of BUKHARIN, in addition to participation in the anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, it was charged that in 1918, acting in collusion with TROTSKY and the leaders of the Left SRs, he

organized a conspiracy that aimed to disrupt the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, to overthrow the Soviet government, and to arrest and kill V. I. LENIN, J.V. STALIN and Ia. M. SVERDLOV. At the same time BUKHARIN was accused of guilt in the villainous assassination attempt against V.I. LENIN by the SR F. KAPLAN.

This accusation was based on the testimony of MANTSEV, KARELIN, KAMKOV, IAKOVLEV and OSINSKII, arrested in other cases.

During the preliminary investigation, as is stated in the indictment signed by Vyshinsky, BUKHARIN "under the weight of evidence" confessed:

"I must admit that we had direct contact with the "Left" Socialist-Revolutionaries which was based on a platform of the violent overthrow of the Soviet government, headed by LENIN, STALIN and SVERDLOV, to be followed by the arrests of LENIN, STALIN and SVERDLOV and the creation of a new government of the "Left" Communists and "Left" SRs."(Arch. case number 967582, vol. 5, l.d. 122)

The question of BUKHARIN's collusion with the "Left" SRs was under investigation even before the arrest of BUKHARIN, during which the latter categorically denied that he had ever had any criminal ties with the "Left" SRs. At the confrontation with the arrested ASTROV which took place on January 13, 1937 at the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), BUKHARIN answered a question of J.V. STALIN's thus:

"What's the point of my lying about the Brest peace? Once the Left SRs came and said, "Let us form a cabinet. We will arrest of LENIN and form a cabinet." Afterwards I told this to Ilyich. "Give me your word that you will not mention this to anyone," Ilyich said. Then, when I was fighting alongside you against TROTSKY, I cited this as an example: Look, this is what factional struggle leads to. At that time it was a bombshell."

BUKHARIN changed his testimony significantly during the course of the preliminary investigation and admitted that in 1918 he had been in an agreement with the "Left" SRs. However, at the trial in his closing statement BUKHARIN made such corrections to his previous testimony that they essentially negated his admission about the intention, in a bloc with the "Left" SRs, to arrest and murder LENIN, STALIN and SVERDLOV. In particular BUKHARIN declared:

I admit that there was one conversation with KARELIN and KAMKOV in which the initiative with regard to the arrest of LENIN for twenty-four hours and a subsequent bloc with the "Left" Socialist-Revolutionaries proceeded from the "Left" Socialist-Revolutionaries. But in the first conversation the reply was negative. As regards the fact that negotiations were subsequently conducted through PIATAKOV with the "Left" Socialist-Revolutionaries and this may be considered, as Citizen Procurator, if I am not mistaken, formulated it, an attempt to overthrow the Soviet power by forcible means—this I admit; it was the case. As to the plan of physical extermination, I categorically deny it, and here the logic to which the State Prosecutor referred, namely, that forcible arrest implied physical extermination, will not help in the least..." (Arch. case № 967582. Trial transcript p. 684)

The confessions of the arrested MANTSEV regarding BUKHARIN's collusion with the "Left" SRs for the overthrow of the Soviet regime and the arrest of LENIN, STALIN and SVERDLOV cannot be considered reliable because MANTSEV gave them after having been sentenced to death. According to the material in the file on MANTSEV it is clear that he was arrested on October 22, 1937 on the charge of belonging to a Trotskyist terrorist organization. He pleaded guilty to this and confessed that his active anti-Soviet activity was preceded by the struggle against the party in a group of so-called "Left Communists" led by BUKHARIN. However MANTSEV did not confess anything at that time about any connection between BUKHARIN and "Left" SRs in 1918.

On December 25, 1937 MANTSEV was sentenced to death by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court. In accordance with the law of December 1 1934 the sentence against MANTSEV was to be carried out immediately, as was specifically mentioned in the text of the sentence. Nevertheless, this sentence was not carried out for a long time, and on January 31, 1938 confessions were obtained from MANTSEV that in 1918 BUKHARIN had conspired with the "Left" SRs to overthrow the Soviet regime and to arrest LENIN, STALIN and SVERDLOV. After MANTSEV had given such testimony, his sentence of execution was canceled by a protest of the President of the Supreme Court and his case was remanded for further investigation. Four months after the trial of the anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, where MANTSEV had acted as a witness, he was again sentenced to the supreme penalty without further investigation and was shot on August 19, 1938.

Another prosecution witness, speaking at the trial in the case of the anti-Soviet bloc, former member of the Central Committee of the "Left" SRs KAMKOV B.D. according to the testimony of the arrested BRIUKHANOV, held together with him in the same cell, said to him:

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"All three of the recent trials are the same kind of swindle as the previous ones. There is not a drop of truth in them. Neither ZINOVIEV nor BUKHARIN was involved in any counter-revolutionary conspiratorial work. Espionage, diversion, sabotage, terrorism, killing – this is all a complete sham, fabricated by the NKVD. Confessions were extracted from the accused by torture, blackmail, beatings, threats, threats against their families, the arrests of their wives etc. by means of physical and mental pressure. At the same time they used bribery, appeasing the defendants, promises not to execute them, etc... "(Arch. case number 967389, separate packet).

After the trial of BUKHARIN et al. KAMKOV was put on trial on the charge that he belonged to an illegal terrorist organization in Arkhangel'sk and was spreading "vile slander in connection with the trials of the Rights and Trotskyites" among those in prison."

On August 29, 1938 at the review of his case in the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court KAMKOV pleaded not guilty to all charges and was sentenced to death.

While BUKHARIN was in custody the prisoner ZARITSKII N.D. had been in the same cell and when questioned on July 3, 1956, testified:

"I spent 4-5 months with BUKHARIN before he was executed...

During the investigation, and especially during the trial, BUKHARIN expressed indignation at the injustice of the accusations against him. He told me that he was accused of plotting to commit terrorist acts against the leaders of the Party and the Government, in an attempt to commit a terrorist act against LENIN.

He tried to convince me that during his last years he had been very close to LENIN, was well received in his family, was essentially in the position of a son, and that he could not even think of committing any act directed against LENIN.

He also told me that he had good personal relations with STALIN, that in a number of instances STALIN had given him and his family assistance in domestic matters, and therefore he never could never even think of murdering him.

BUKHARIN was indignant that he was being questioned about some kind of criminal ties with whom he had never known.

During the trial itself BUKHARIN told me that people were making fictitious confessions to the court, talking about the existence of a center in which he was allegedly included, although he had no idea that it even existed."

Before his arrest, and under investigation BUKHARIN for a long time did not admit guilt to anything. During this time he wrote a lot of letters and petitions addressed to J.V. STALIN in which he gave his alibis. This, together with the facts cited above, suggests that we ought not to treat BUKHARIN'S subsequent confessions with confidence. Especially since the verification process has established

that a significant part of his testimony has been refuted beyond doubt as false. Specifically, 15 Party and Soviet workers who appear in BUKHKARIN'S confessions as his accomplices have been fully rehabilitated.

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During the investigation and at trial RYKOV acknowledged that he was a leading participant in the anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites and was carrying out hostile activity.

However, the verification has established that these confessions of RYKOV's are, in the overwhelming majority of cases, false.

On August 9, 1937 RYKOV, for example, stated:

"In previous interrogations I testified about the reserve cadres of our organization but I did not talk about the main issue, namely that acting on a directive of the center of the Rights and specifically, on a directive that I gave to ANTIPOV, a reserve center of the organization of Rights was created. The structure of the center included: ANTIPOV, SULIMOV, UKHANOV, SYRTSOV, and KHALATOV" (Arch. case number 967582, v. 1, l.d. 138)

These confessions of RYKOV's are entirely fictional, because, as the verification process has determined, ANTIPOV, SULIMOV, UKHANOV, SYRTSOV and KHALATOV had been arrested without basis on charges of belonging to a counterrevolutionary organization of the Rights, and therefore in 1955-1956 they were fully rehabilitated. During his interrogation of 23 June 1937 RYKOV confessed:

"... The central figure in the organization of the Rights in the Urals was KABAKOV, whom we carefully kept very secret. I personally brought KABAKOV into the organization of the Rights during a process of repeated conversations... I kept KABAKOV, as a very important member of our organization, up to date with our conspiratorial plans. In particular, KABAKOV was informed by me

of the plan of the so-called palace coup." (Arch. case number 967582, vol. 1, l.d. 97-99)

In 1937 KABAKOV was arrested on the basis of this evidence and sentenced to death. KABAKOV had now been rehabilitated.

During the investigation RYKOV also confirmed that a center of the organization of Rights which included ANTIPOV, LOBOV, KOMAROV, ZHUKOV, UGAROV, KODATSKII and CHUDOV had existed in Leningrad since 1928.

Upon verification it has turned out that these confessions of RYKOV'S too are untrue. All of the above persons have now been rehabilitated.

According to RYKOV'S testimony KARAKHAN, allegedly a member of an organization of Rights, held talks on TOMSKII's instructions with representatives of fascist Germany, to whom he made it clear that in the event the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites came to power certain concessions would be made in favor of the capitalist countries.

These confessions of RYKOV'S too have not been confirmed since KARAKHAN, brought to trial in 1937, refused to confess to any of the charges.

In RYKOV'S confessions comrade P. Togliatti also figures as a person who shared the views of Rights and was sympathetic to their struggle against the CC CPSU(b). The falsehood of these confessions speaks for itself.

Of those among his associates who figure in RYKOV'S testimony more than 30 people have far been rehabilitated.

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Defendant SHARANGOVICH also gave unreliable confessions about criminal activity.

Thus, during the interrogation of August 13 1937 SHARANGOVICH said that he had been recruited to the organization of anti-Soviet

activity in 1932 by Sulimov, and that in 1933 the former third secretary of the Communist Party of Belarus ZHEBROVSKII had recruited him to work for Polish intelligence.

Later SHARANGOVICH changed his testimony somewhat and began to claim that he had been drawn into collaboration with Polish intelligence by VNOROVSKII, an employee in the Soviet Embassy in Warsaw.

However, the verification has determined that SULIMOV and ZHEBROVSKII have now been rehabilitated as having been condemned although they were innocent. As for VNOROVSKII, no information about his links with the Polish intelligence service have been found among the archival materials of the intelligence agencies of bourgeois Poland.

In addition SHARANGOVICH claimed during the investigation that he was allegedly linked in espionage work to BOGUTSKI and SLAVINSKI. BOGUTSKI and SLAVINSKI, convicted in the past as traitors and spies, have now been rehabilitated.

Also terminated for lack of evidence of a crime are the cases of a number of individuals whom SHARANGOVICH named as members of the counterrevolutionary organization, including GOLODED, the former chairman of the Council of People's Commissar's of the Byelorussian SSR.

During the investigation ROZENGOL'TS, GRIN'KO, CHERNOV, IKRAMOV, and KHODZHAEV also made confessions that do not inspire confidence.

In pleading guilty to belonging to the anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites ROZENGOL'TS confessed:

"After the arrest of RYKOV I maintained contact with the Rights through RUDZUTAK and partly through ANTIPOV and ZHUKOV...

I told RUDZUTAK about the sabotage that I was carrying out in foreign trade and about my ties with TROTSKY. At the end of 1936 (or early in 1937), I had a detailed conversation with RUDZUTAK

about the last period of my relations with RYKOV and the blueprint of the future government agreed upon earlier." (Arch. case number 967582, vol. 6, l.d. 38-39)

As ROZENGOL'TS confessed further, RUDZUTAK proposed to include ANTIPOV, LOBOV, ZHUKOV, KODATSKII, and KOMAROV in the new government.

Those whom ROZENGOL'TS named— RUDZUTAK ANTIPOV, LOBOV, ZHUKOV, KODATSKII and KOMAROV, as already mentioned above, have now rehabilitated.

In 1955-1956 the cases against MURADYAN, ELIAVA Sh, RABINOVICH, SHINDEL', BELEN'KII B.S., KANDELAKI, SUD'IN, VEITSER and others whom ROZENGOL'TS named during the investigation as his accomplices in enemy activity have been terminated for lack of evidence of a crime.

The same must be said about the confessions of GRIN'KO and CHERNOV. The latter, for example, asserted during the investigation that in the summer of 1936, at the direction of RYKOV, he got in touch with LIUBIMOV, a member of the reserve center of the Rights, and learned from him that BUBNOV and

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BAUMAN were part of this center... CHERNOV further confessed that in his enemy activity he contacted the Trotskyists through RUKHIMOVICH.

All these people have now been rehabilitated since it has been established that they were all convicted on the basis of false materials.

The verification established that GRIN'KO and CHERNOV signed fictional confessions concerning 46 persons who were responsible Soviet and Party workers, the cases against whom have now been terminated for lack of evidence of a crime.

During the investigation IKRAMOV gave very confusing confessions. Initially IKRAMOV argued that, being one of the leaders

of a nationalist organization, he had established communication with the center of the Rights in 1935 through ANTIPOV.

According to IKRAMOV, ANTIPOV then informed him that: "In the struggle against the Soviet government the leadership center of the Rights considers it necessary to use all available ... means such as armed insurrection, sabotage in various sectors of the economy, diversion and terror against the leaders of the Party and the Soviet government." (Arch. case number 967582, v. 12, l.d. 94)

At the same time IKRAMOV admitted that according to his directives subversive activities on a large scale were carried out in Uzbekistan. However, attention should be paid to the fact that in some cases IKRAMOV'S confessions about specific sabotage activities were clearly far-fetched. Thus, at the interrogation October 10-12 1937 IKRAMOV said that he and his accomplices "... deliberately disrupted Party education at the expense of the Marxist-Leninist education of the masses; we advocated the need to study general subjects, or, as we said to each other, to raise the overall level without Marxism ...

We sold half of the political education book by Ingulov, published in the Uzbek language, in other republics, despite the dire need it in Uzbekistan." (Arch. case number 967582, v. 12, l.d. 55)

During the interrogation of February 28 1938 IKRAMOV, without explaining why, substantially changed his testimony about the time and circumstances of the establishment of the bloc with the Rights, saying that he had established contact with the center of the Rights not in 1935 but in 1933, and not through ANTIPOV but through BUKHARIN. At the same time IKRAMOV testified that the center of the Rights was comprised of BUKHARIN, RYKOV, TOMSKII and UGLANOV.

It is well known that TOMSKII committed suicide in 1936. In his suicide letter addressed to J.V. STALIN TOMSKII stated that he had read the ruling of the court concerning including him in the investigation in connection with the testimony of those arrested in the case of the "United Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist center" and

rejected the accusations against him as defamatory. Without denying his past political mistakes TOMSKII at the same time wrote that he could not bear being put alongside fascists and therefore was committing suicide and wished the party new victories.

Named by IKRAMOV as a member of the center of the Rights UGLANOV was arrested and confessed at trial that he had carried out opposition activities until 1933 but after that had not carried out any anti-party work.

Serious doubts have also arisen concerning the credibility of KHODZHAEV'S confessions about his criminal activities. Specifically, KHODZHAEV asserted

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that in 1928 he had been drawn into criminal work concerning the separation of Uzbekistan from the USSR by the former chairman of the State Planning Committee of the Uzbek SSR BURNASHEV.

It has been established by the verification we have conducted that BURNASHEV, referred to in KHODZHAEV'S testimony, had been convicted though innocent, in connection with which the Chief Military Prosecutor has now raised the question of his rehabilitation.

Although ZELENSKII, IVANOV and ZUBAREV pleaded guilty to all counts of the indictment, their confessions about the conspiracy of the Rights do not inspire confidence. More than 30 of the Soviet and party activists about whom ZELENSKII, IVANOV and ZUBAREV confessed to being accomplices to criminal activities, have now been rehabilitated because their innocence has been completely proven.

ZELENSKII, IVANOV and ZUBAREV, in addition to participation in the anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, were also accused of collaboration with the Tsarist secret police.

It has been established by the verification that the testimony of ZELENSKII, IVANOV and ZUBAREV about their collaboration with

the Tsarist secret police cannot be sufficiently confirmed by the materials in the State historical archives where the records of police and gendarme corps of tsarist Russia are kept.

According to the archival facts agent "Slepoi" — Isaiah Abramovich ZELENSKII — collaborated with the Samara provincial gendarmerie beginning in 1916. The defendant in the present case, Isaac Abramovich ZELENSKII, was exiled from Sormovo to three years under police surveillance in Irkutsk province in 1915 by order of the Special Session of the Minister of the Interior for belonging to the RSDLP.

From the documents of the State Historical Archives it may also be seen that ZELENSKII had a brother named Isaiah.

With respect to IVANOV and ZUBAREV no documents have been found in the archives that might even indirectly confirm their involvement in the tsarist secret police. However ZUBAREV was specifically accused at trial by the confessions of former police officer VASSILIEV, who testified that he had recruited ZUBAREV.

Given such materials we cannot give a definitive opinion concerning the involvement of ZELENSKII, ZUBAREV and IVANOV with the tsarist secret police at the present time. These circumstances are subject to additional verification.

In the practical criminal activity attributed to the defendants in the case of "anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" the killings of A.M. GOR'KII, V.V.KUIBYSHEV, V.R. MENZHINSKII and GOR'KII's son M.A. PESHKOV, as well the attempt to poison EZHOV, occupy a very important place.

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This accusation was brought against the leaders of the Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, including IAGODA, against the well-known doctors PLETNEV D.D., LEVIN L.G., KAZAKOV I.N., former secretary of the NKVD USSR BULANOV, KRIUCHKOV P.P., secretary to A .M.

GOR'KII, and MAKSIMOV-DIKOVSKII V.A., assistant to V.V.KUIBYSHEV, who were brought to justice in this case.

All the defendants named pleaded guilty to the charges. However, the available materials indicate that these confessions are invalid.

PLETNEV, who during the investigation and at trial admitted his guilt in the organization of killing A.M. GOR'KII and V.V.KUIBYSHEV on the instruction of IAGODA, after the conviction on June 11, 1939 addressed the following statement to Comrade VM Molotov:

"I was sentenced in the Bukharin case. During the investigation I admitted the accusations against me, and at trial I did not renounce them. I was slandered. The indictment leveled against me is false. My mind was under compulsion. But I did not consider it possible to make this statement at trial like Krestinskii. I have been in prison since December 1937. I am suffering morally to the ultimate degree. My health has deteriorated sharply. I am already 66 years old. The point around which the indictment was built was my meeting with Iagoda, where he allegedly threatening me and my family and demanded my involvement in the killing of Gor'kii. This meeting never took place either in August or, according to the next version, in June. Altogether I saw Iagoda only once in my life during his attack of angina pectoris. I saw him only in medical consultation. I never had any conversations with IAGODA except about his illness. All my life since October of 1917 I have been loyal to the Soviet regime and under the leadership of the party have given all my strength and knowledge to my homeland. Now I am deprived of all this. I swear to my innocence by all that is holy to me. I ask for a review of my case. I ask to be interviewed for this purpose or that that I be given an opportunity to submit a detailed statement in a sealed envelope." (Supervisory production № 7343-9, l.d. 6)

This declaration was transmitted by the Secretariat of comrade MOLOTOV V.M. to Beria.

Subsequently PLETNEV repeatedly made similar statements. About one of them former USSR Prosecutor BOCHKOV informed the Secretariat of Comrade V.M. MOLOTOV:

"The arguments set out in the complaint of PLETNEV D.D. and, in particular, his retraction of his testimony, are a provocation and a continuation of his hostile work ... review of the case is denied, of which PLETNEV D.D. has been informed." (Supervisory production, № 7343-9, l.d. 26)

In confirmation of the charge of murder brought against IAGODA, PLETNEV, LEVIN, KAZAKOV, KRIUCHKOV, BULANOV and MAKSIMOV-DIKOVSKII, eminent medical practitioners V.N. VINOGRADOV, Professor N.A. SHERESHEVSKII and others were called as experts at the trial. They drew the conclusion that GOR'KII, MENZHINSKII, KUIBYSHEV and PESHKOV died as a result

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of the clearly wrong medical treatment applied to them by PLETNEV, LEVIN and KAZAKOV.

With regard to the attempted assassination of EZHOV the experts concluded: "...it must be taken as absolutely established that the poisoning of Comrade N. I. EZHOV by mercury absorbed through the respiratory tract, the most potent and dangerous method of chronic mercurial poisoning, was organized and put into execution." (Court proceedings, p. 547 (621))

Professor VINOGRADOV and Professor SHERESHEVSKII were interviewed in 1956 and stated that no documents were submitted to them confirming the incorrect treatment of KUIBYSHEV, GOR'KII, MENZHINSKII, and PESHKOV, that they reached their conclusion only on the testimony of the defendants, who admitted their guilt completely. Thus VINOGRADOV in particular pointed out:

"Conclusions were drawn by myself and the other experts on the basis of general questions without the presentation of any detailed documentation (medical history with detailed logs, analyses and pictures). Thus, our answers to these questions were of a purely theoretical nature. We could not assert the authenticity of this fact on the basis of the materials that were before us."

Concerning this matter SHERESHEVSKII said:

."... our conclusion was derived from the testimony of the accused and could not serve as additional proof of their guilt, inasmuch as there were no medical documents presented to us confirming the fact that the patients had been treated in the way mentioned in the testimony of the accused."

At the same time SHERESHEVSKII and VINOGRADOV described PLETNEV as an outstanding scientist of world renown. And with regard to LEVIN, accused of killing GOR'KII, SHERESHEVSKII said: "LEVIN was GOR'KII"s attending physician and, as far as I know, loved him greatly. When he talked about him, he was simply transformed. And that is not at all compatible with the accusation against him of the deliberate murder of A.M. GOR'KII. "

Upon verification it was also revealed that the materials on the so-called "poisoning" of EZHOV were completely falsified.

In an interrogation of April 16 1939 FRINOVSKII testified about this: "NIKOLAEV-ZHURID, with my participation and as directed by EZHOV, fabricated the case of the so-called mercury poisoning of EZHOV. NIKOLAEV personally directed the case. EZHOV gave out the idea that he was ill from poisoning, and NIKOLAEV seized on it, and under great pressure got confessions about this from BULANOV, then from IAGODA's courier ... and then from IAGODA himself.

From somewhere or other NIKOLAEV obtained a pharmacy jar with mercury, which he turned into material proof of the mercury poisoning of EZHOV. NIKOLAEV provided the corresponding expert opinion of the poisoning." (Arch. case number 975181, Vol. 2, l.d. 62)

EZHOV confirmed these confessions of FRINOVSKII'S.

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According to verification in the special State archive of the USSR no materials have been found indicating a connection of persons in this case with foreign intelligence agencies.

Persons brought to trial in this case, as well as those in the previous public trials, were accused of carrying out their criminal activities on the instructions of TROTSKY. Concerning this, TROTSKY in his article "The outcome of the process," of March 12, 1938 wrote:

"According to the results which Vyshinsky must draw from the latest series of trials the Soviet state is revealed as a centralized apparatus for state treason.

The heads of the government and the majority of people's commissars (Rykov, Kamenev, Rudzutak, Smirnov, Iakovlev, Rosengolts, Chernov, Grin'ko, Ivanov, Osinsky, et al.); the most important Soviet diplomats (Rakovsky, Sokol' Nikov, Krestinskii, Karakhan, Bogomolov, Yurenev, et al.); all the leaders of the Communist International (Zinoviev, Bukharin, Radek); the best leaders of the economy (Pyatakov, Smirnov, Serebriakov, Lifshits, et al.); the best commanders and leaders of the army (Tukhachevsky, Gamarnik, Yakir, Uborevich, Kork, Muralov, Mrachkovsky, Alksnis, Admiral Orlov, et al.); the most outstanding worker-revolutionists produced by Bolshevism in thirty-five years (Tomskii, Yevdokimov, Smirnov, Bakaev, Serebriakov, Boguslavsky, Mrachkovsky); the heads and members of the governments of the Russian Soviet Republic (Sulimov, Varvara Iakovleva); all the heads without exception of the thirty Soviet Republics, i.e., the leaders developed by the movement of the liberated nationalities (Budu Mdivani, Okudzhava, Kavtaradze, Chervyakov, Goloded, Skrypnik, Lyubchenko, Nestor Lakoba, Faizul Khodzhaev, Ikramov, and dozens of others); the leaders of the GPU for the past ten years, Yagoda and his collaborators; finally, and this is most important, the members of the all-powerful Politburo, the de facto supreme power of the country, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Tomskii, Rykov, Bukharin, Rudzutak—all of them participated in a conspiracy against the Soviet power in the years when it was in their hands!

All of them, as agents of foreign powers, strove to rip to shreds the Soviet federation they had built and to enslave to fascism the peoples for whose liberation they had fought for dozens of years!

In this criminal activity premiers, ministers, marshals, and ambassadors invariably submitted to one person. Not to an official leader, no— to an exile! It was enough for Trotsky to move a finger and the veterans of the revolution became agents of Hitler and the Mikado.

Upon the "instructions" of Trotsky through an incidental TASS correspondent, the leaders of industry, transportation, and agriculture destroyed the productive forces of the country and its culture.

Upon an order from the "enemy of the people," sent from Norway or Mexico, railway workers of the Far East organized the wrecking of military trains, and venerable Kremlin physicians poisoned their patients. This is the astonishing picture of the Soviet state that Vyshinskii is forced to present on the basis of the revelations of the latest trials.

But here a difficulty arises. A totalitarian regime is a dictatorship of the apparatus. If all the key positions of the apparatus were occupied by Trotskyists who submitted to me, why, in that case, is Stalin in the Kremlin and I am in exile? (Arch. case number 13005, Vol. 3, l.d. 308-309)

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IV. <u>The situation concerning the investigation and the trial</u>

The investigation of the case of the so-called "Anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" and its consideration at trial, conducted between 1937 and early 1938, was characterized by massive repression of Soviet citizens, by the most serious violations of socialist legality, by severe beatings of prisoners and by various and provocative techniques by means of which the investigating authorities extorted confessions from the prisoners and the courts handed down clearly unjustified sentences.

Due to the fact that the vast majority of the NKVD workers who had any relationship with the so-called anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites were subsequently shot it is not possible at the present time to fully explore the conditions under which the investigation in this case was conducted.

Nevertheless, even those far from exhaustive materials which were obtained during the verification give evidence of the gross arbitrariness and provocation that resulted in the extraction of confessions from the prisoners.

A number of former employees of the NKVD, interrogated during course of the verification, testified to the existence in 1937-1938 of a situation whereby the mere fact that a prisoner under investigation was put into the Lefortovo prison obliged the investigator to beat him. EZHOV went at night to the investigators' rooms along with other leading workers [of the NKVD – GF] and personally showed how to "obtain the necessary" confessions."

Questioned in 1956 ARONSON Ia.A., a former employee of the NKVD who took part in the investigation of the case of the anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, testified to this:

"... The period of late 1937 and early 1938, when the case in question was under investigation, was a period of mass beatings of prisoners. I remember that during that period EZHOV often came to the prison, usually at night, and made the rounds of the investigators' rooms. His whole conversation usually boiled down to this: "Whom are you interrogating? What's the result? Give it to him properly!" Vlodzimirsky and others accompanied EZHOV and sometimes immediately showed how to give it."

ROSENBLIUM A.A., who worked in 1937-1938 as chief of the medical unit of the Lefortovo prison was questioned in 1956 and stated:

"While working in the medical unit of the Lefortovo prison I saw many prisoners in serious condition after the beatings inflicted on them during the investigation. In particular, I provided medical care to MAR'IASIN, who was severely beaten during the investigation.

Former NKVD worker BLAT was in serious condition in the infirmary. He had tried to commit suicide and had also been severely beaten...

... KRESTINSKII was brought from an interrogation to us in the medical unit in an unconscious state. He had been severely beaten, his whole back was one continuous wound, there was not a single unbruised place on it. As I recall, he lay in the medical unit for three days in very serious condition.

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I often dropped in to see IAGODA. Usually, he complained about his heart ... once I saw on his face a large bruise under his eye."

Other former NKVD workers also confessed about beatings of prisoners. Thus, witness LERNER N.M. who took part in the interrogations of IAGODA, stated on June 2, 1956:

."... IAGODA often complained that he was beaten during the interrogations. I did not believe him and told him so.

Once, this was in the Lefortovo prison, I questioned IAGODA. EZHOV, FRINOVSKII and KURSKII dropped in at my office and at EZHOV'S suggestion I left the office. When sometime later I was allowed to go back, I saw a black eye on IAGODA'S face. IAGODA, showing me the black eye, asked me: "Now do you believe that they are beating me?" In addition I have personally seen BULANOV with signs of beatings on his face." The above-mentioned ARONSON also confirmed that he was aware of the beating during the investigation of prisoners RYKOV, SHARANGOVICH and IAGODA, and testified:

"I myself personally heard a complaint about beating from RYKOV. There was to be a face-to-face confrontation between RYKOV and NIKOLAEVSKII. They brought RYKOV in first. He looked pitiful, depressed. Either I or LULOV, I do not remember exactly, asked him: "What's the matter, why do you look like that?" To this RYKOV replied, I remember it very well: "I feel demoralized," and to the next question - Why? – he replied: "They beat me.""

According to cell agent "Blagin" BESSONOV told his cellmates:

"He, BESSONOV, signed the accusations against him because otherwise he was threatened with fascist reprisal. In the Lefortovo he saw former members of the Central Committee who were beaten during the investigation, and named PTUKHA, a former member of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), LAVRENT'EV, Central Committee member and others. KRESTINSKII was subjected to a severe beating; he wore a plaster cast during the trial." (Arch. case number 101492, vol. 1, l.d. 27) The above testimony about beatings of prisoners in the case of the anti-Soviet Right-Trotskyite center, of course, does not reveal the whole picture, for this period was characterized by the greatest orgy of violence in investigation and it was precisely at this time that beatings took on such a character that killings during interrogation occurred more than once. About this matter witness ROSENBLIUM A.A. testified:

"I worked as a doctor of the Lefortovo from December 1936 to January 31, 1938. During this period of time 49 people were recorded as having died in Lefortovo prison from beatings and exhaustion." (File on the indictment of Anvel't)

As has now been established, on October 14, 1937 chief of the Science section of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) BAUMAN K.L. was killed during the investigation; on December 1,

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1937, chief of the political directorate of the People's Commissariat of Soviet Farms the old Bolshevik SOMS K.; on December 11, 1937 Comintern worker Anvel't; on May 5, 1938 the deputy head of the UNKVD of the Leningrad oblast' SOSTE M.Ia.; on November 9, 1938 Marshal of the Soviet Union BLÜCHER and others

It should be noted that prisoners were prodded into self-incrimination and slander against others not only by direct physical violence but also by mental violence. Threats of repression against relatives, threats of beatings, cries of prisoners being beaten — the investigators used all these in order to obtain "confessions." Former investigator ARONSON testified about this:

"I personally did not use physical force against RAKOVSKY, obviously, because he did not confess to me about espionage (RAKOVSKY "confessed" himself guilty of espionage to other investigators). I admit that I might have applied other means of pressure — measures of a mental nature: threats against him personally, threats to arrest members of his family. I seem to remember, in particular, that RAKOVSKY was informed about the arrest of his wife and that her fate depended upon his confessions. Such was the system of interrogation of prisoners, introduced as mandatory methods by the leadership of the NKVD of that time. "

As is evident from the report of agent "Dima" RAKOVSKY himself, in his cell at the Orlov prison, spoke about the situation of the investigation of his case as follows: "... when almost from the first day they make it clear that you have to lie about yourself and others, smear your own name and honor, then you are overcome with rage and indignation. You begin to fight, to resist, but then when they tell you, as ARONSON told me: "Old man, do not hold out, confess," when they tell you that they will annihilate your family, that they will shoot you, you give up. When I was told that my wife had been put into the Lefortovo, I screamed and grabbed my head — that meant she would die. Fear for your family, the consciousness that you are sending them to their deaths, fear and the desire to live, complete hopelessness, and then the party "automatic", the habit of obeying the party — these things make you lie and do the devil knows what. All this is a lie, there is not a drop of truth in any of these cases." (Arch. case number 300956, v. 9, l.d. 321)

Further, he also said:

"I was taken from the Butyrki [prison] to the Lefortovo, and from the Lefortovo to the Lubyanka. Every night I expected to be shot. In Lefortovo, in this horrible prison where you could hear the screams of people under torture, the moaning of women, shots during times of execution and the constant noise of aircraft engines, they suddenly cut my fingernails— I realized that they wanted to torture me. Soon I was summoned at night. I appeared before NIKOLAEV, AGAS, and another type that does the torturing. When I walked in, I was told that I was a spy. "Me, a spy?" "Yes, you. And you yourself

will tell us about your activities." I realized that this was the end, that the only way to salvation was through admitting the most serious charges. This is the dialectic ... Everything went into it—the Japanese and the British. I myself sometimes became confused, I said so much." (ibid, l.d. 322)

While serving his prison sentence BESSONOV categorically denied his guilt and said this about the reasons that prompted him to make false confessions:

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"At first a lieutenant interrogated me, and then a major of state security warned that if I did not give the necessary confessions they would make mincemeat out of me. And indeed a few days later I was called late in the evening to some room hitherto unknown to me. Five fellows were already there and on the table lay the necessary accessories—rubber club, gloves, stick and other things.

The major, wiping his hands, asked me about confessions and I, seeing all this, became a little cowardly, because I already knew about beatings to death ... I decided to lie. Well, and that's the way I became a counter-revolutionary. And the trial was a complete farce." (Ibid, vol. II, l.d. 61)

The convicted doctor PLETNEV reported vividly from prison on the system of beatings, threats, blackmail and provocations. In a statement of June 8, 1940 he wrote: "For three years I suffered from investigation to investigation, from court to court, from one prison into another, and yet I am completely innocent...

... the case of the killing of GOR'KII and KUIBYSHEV. I spoke to you about it, but the investigative unit will not allow any talk about this, insisting several times that I withdraw my statements, which I did not do.

... the case arose on the testimony of IAGODA who, according to his own personal statement, called me in the middle of August 1934 and with threats demanded from me my complicity with doctor LEVIN in the killing of GOR'KII. Upon my denial of this investigator

GERSON hit me in the face. I pointed out that this fact could not have taken place, since from July 20 1934 to the beginning of October I had been on a business trip abroad. The next day my words were confirmed by a certificate from the Passport Office ... and the fact of my alibi in August 1934. Then the investigator told me: "If the top leadership assumes that you are guilty, then even if you were 100% right, you will still be 100% guilty." There followed threats against me and my wife and, finally, an alternative was suggested by the chief of the Special Political Division LITVIN, chief of the investigative unit KAGAN, and investigator GERSON: either, if I continued my stubbornness, life in prison and death in it, or if I "agreed" to give a "clarification" about the time of my meeting with IAGODA in June 1934 – and I only saw IAGODA for the first time in my life in 1935 – and then 2-3 months after the trial, complete freedom and scientific work — in a word, "a repetition of RAMZIN'S fate." This was indirectly confirmed by EZHOV. You know the result. I so trusted the government that the thought of such lies and blackmail on the part of anyone, especially a member of the Politburo, never could have entered my head... Help me, because I perish though innocent. I ask only that you take a personal interest, and not transfer the matter to the detention unit. There bias rules. If the NKVD has seized you, that means you are guilty. Put yourself for a moment in my position and you will see the full depth of my misery. Believe me. There is still much more I could say in my own defense ..." (private prison file l.d. 206-207)

The "processing" of prisoners in the case of the Right-Trotskyite center did not stop day or night. This was handled during the interrogations by the investigators and in the cells by specially placed people. Concerning one of these people RAKOVSKY, after his conviction, told fellow his fellow inmates:

"In Lefortovo they put Lieberman into my cell... They let me write my confessions in my cell. When I presented them, if they did not like them, they

would tear them up and throw them in my face. When I consulted with Lieberman my confessions always satisfied the investigators. He served as the transfer authority, he dictated to me what they wanted and through him I asked their advice...

In the end, I did not care, because I lied. And he could not hurt me, on the contrary, he facilitated my work." (Arch. case number 300956, v. 9, l.d. 324)

In this respect the fate of the former head of the 5th department of the UNKVD of the Saratov oblast' ZARITSKII N.D. is of some interest.

ZARITSKII was arrested for crude falsification of investigative materials, fabricating fictitious confessions that allegedly confirmed the existence of the organization of Rights which in reality did not exist (that is, at that time!). In essence there was no interrogation on the charges against ZARITSKII, there was only the taking of a statement and he was sentenced to two years in prison, and then he was confined among other detainees. One after another he sat in the same cell with the former regional secretaries of party obkoms KABAKOV, RYNDIN, and KHATAYEVICH, and then for 4-5 months together with BUKHARIN.

After BUKHARIN was executed ZARITSKII's case was reviewed without further investigation. His sentence was set aside and ZARITSKII was restored in the party and to operational work in the NKVD. Such encouragement of prisoners for "services" in exposing the Rights were not uncommon.

Likewise discontinued was the case against ASTROV, who admitted to being an active participant in the counter-revolutionary terrorist organization of Rights, who was one of the first to expose BUKHARIN, including in face-to-face confrontations in the Politburo of the CPSU(b).

Likewise the lives of RADEK and SOKOL'NIKOV were spared although they were formally no less guilty than their fellow defendants, who were witnesses for the prosecution against BUKHARIN and RYKOV even before they had been arrested.

From materials in the archives of the KGB we know that SOKOL'NIKOV was brought to Moscow from prison in the fall of 1937 to be used as a witness at the upcoming trial of BUKHARIN, RYKOV and others, but because of his refusal to testify at trial he was sent back.

When SOKOL'NIKOV and RADEK began in prison to expose the falsity of the previous trials they were killed.

For the same purpose was set aside the verdict against MANTSEV, who, having been condemned to death, began to give confessions about the involvement of BUKHARIN in 1918 in a conspiracy of Left SRs and about his intention to arrest LENIN, STALIN and SVERDLOV. After the trial in the case of the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, without any additional investigative actions, MANTSEV was again convicted and then executed. Now he is fully rehabilitated.

It is clear from the testimony of former employee of the NKVD TSERPENTO .P.I how prisoners gave confessions on order of the investigators.

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"In the summer of 1937 LITVIN personally interrogated ANTIPOV... In the transcript of this interrogation it was written that in September 1936 ANTIPOV received from RYKOV a directive to create a reserve center of the Rights. When these confessions were presented to RYKOV, RYKOV categorically denied meeting with ANTIPOV in September of 1936 and insisted that it was in 1932.

Then in my presence LULOV persuaded RYKOV to corroborate ANTIPOV's confession and say that it would be in his, RYKOV's, interest to make such a confession...

During the preparation of the trial of RYKOV, BUKHARIN and others (at the end of 1937) I learned from GLEBOV that now ANTIPOV was writing completely new confessions in which, in particular, he was saying that the reserve center of the Rights was established in 1932.

Then GLEBOV proposed that I re-interrogate RYKOV in accordance with these new confessions.

When I expressed surprise that ANTIPOV managed to fool LITVIN, by giving him inappropriate, false confessions, GLEBOV told me that this was nothing surprising, since ANTIPOV was the kind of prisoner who is ready to give any confessions and in any direction.

By GLEBOV'S arrangement before the trial I had to persuade RYKOV to affirm his first confessions, which spoke of the creation of the reserve center of the Rights in 1932, not 1936." (Arch. case number 982027, vol. 1, l.d. 222- 223)

As TSERPENTO further confessed, RYKOV, signing one of the new versions of "his" confessions, said:

"One advises me not to confess against ANTIPOV, and the other (i.e. me) requires confessions against him. I do not know who to listen to." (Arch. case number 982027, vol. 1, l.d. 30-31)

As you know, at the very first meeting of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR on March 2, 1938 the prisoner KRESTINSKII pleaded not guilty and retracted the confessions that had been given by him during the investigation. At that time KRESTINSKII said bluntly that the confessions that he had given before were not voluntary, and that he had not retracted them during the investigation only out of concern that his statement would not reach the leadership of the party and government. (Case report, pp. 54, 58)

This failure caused confusion among members of the Military College, and the court adjourned. But the next day KRESTINSKII reaffirmed the confessions he had given during the investigation, and said that the day before he had mechanically pleaded not guilty under the influence of a sense of false shame. (ibid, p. 146)

The verification has determined that during the process of the investigation KRESTINSKII gave confessions because he had been subjected to brutal beatings, and hence his rejection of these confessions at the trial had a real basis.

Concerning the circumstances surrounding KRESTINSKII'S confessions at the trial, former employee of the NKVD ARONSON has testified:

"I, like many other NKVD men, attended the trial. At the first session KRESTINSKII retracted the confessions he had given earlier and pleaded not guilty. This statement caused confusion on the part of VYSHINSKII, who was in charge of the trial.

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During the break we investigators discussed what had happened and talked about how to get out of this situation. NIKOLAEV (he was in charge of RAKOVSKY's case) then said that he would try to resolve the incident. When the accused were taken from the court they took KRESTINSKII together with RAKOVSKY. The next day KRESTINSKII pleaded guilty and confirmed all the confessions that he had given previously. I think, and the investigators said the same thing at the time, that KRESTINSKII had not been beaten, but RAKOVSKY had persuaded him. They said that RAKOVSKY, who in general had great influence on KRESTINSKII, told him something like this: "You ought to admit guilt, all the defendants are pleading guilty, and the court will consider anyone who does not admit guilt as an unrepentant enemy and will unquestionably shoot him, while in return for the admission of guilt they will preserve your life. The family of him who confessed guilt will not suffer, but in case of rejection of guilt the family will also be repressed." This so affected KRESTINSKII that to the end of the trial he did not try any more to reject the confessions he had given during the investigation."

Also characteristic in this regard is the behavior at trial of the public prosecutor VYSHINSKII. When the court summoned KRESTINSKII for questioning VYSHINSKII did not permit his immediate interrogation and first asked a number of questions precisely to RAKOVSKY.

KRESTINSKII was interrogated only after RAKOVSKY had given him an example — he fully admitted his guilt and named KRESTINSKII as his accomplice.

Those prisoners who were being made ready for the trial and for face-to-face confrontations to be carried out with participation by leaders of the Party and government were especially carefully prepared by the investigating authorities. Here everything was done strictly according to a developed plan and the prisoners repeatedly rehearsed "their" confessions.

As you know, some of the persons involved in the case of the Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites before their criminal prosecution were given face-to-face confrontations where prisoners previously arrested accused them of committing serious crimes against the state.

From the confessions, given after his arrest, of the former Deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR FRINOVSKII it may be seen that specially instructed prisoners were brought forth at these face-to-face confrontations.

FRINOVSKII confessed about this:

"At first the investigator, then the chief of the department, prepared the prisoners in a special way. The preparation consisted in the reading of the confessions that the prisoner had given against the person with whom the face-to-face confrontation was about to be conducted. They explained how the face-to-face confrontation would be conducted, what unexpected questions might be presented to the prisoner and how he should answer.

In essence what happened was an agreement and a rehearsal for the upcoming face-to-face confrontation. After that EZHOV would call the prisoner to himself, or pretending that he had by chance dropped in to the investigator's room where the prisoner was sitting he would speak to him about the upcoming confrontation and would ask whether he felt himself strong, would he confirm his confessions, and by the way, would mention that members of the government would be present at the face-to-face confrontation.

Usually EZHOV was nervous before such face-to-face confrontations even after he had had a talk with the prisoner. There were cases when the prisoner

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would state, during the conversation with EZHOV, that his confessions were not true, that he had been falsely accused." (Arch. case number 975181, Vol. 2, l.d. 37-38)

Before the trial, the preparation of the prisoners proceeded along two lines. On the one hand, by means of various promises (as a rule - the preservation of life), they urged them to stand firm on specific confessions. On the other hand they formulated the prisoners' answers in advance and the prisoners again rehearsed them.

The same FRINOVSKII confessed about this:

"He spoke for a long time with IAGODA, and that talk concerned, in the main, of assuring IAGODA that he would not be shot.

EZHOV had conversations several times with BUKHARIN and RYKOV and also in order to calm them assured them that under no circumstances would they be shot.

EZHOV had one conversation with BULANOV, and began this conversation in the presence of the investigator and myself, and finished the conversation one on one, having asked us to leave.

At that moment BULANOV had begun talking about the poisoning of EZHOV. What the conversation was about EZHOV did not say. When he asked us to enter again he said: "Behave yourself well at the trial – I will ask that you not be shot.'" (Arch. case number 975181, Vol. 2, l.d. 39)

RAKOVSKY talked about the same thing while in the Orel prison:

"During the trial the investigators never left me, encouraged me, talked about the impression that this revolting farce was making on me." (Arch. case number 300956, v. 7, l.d. 325)

Questioned as a witness former NKVD man LERNER, who was involved in the investigation of this case, said the following in an interrogation in July 1956:

"I did not lead the investigation of the IAGODA case to its conclusion, the last 6-8 months I was doing other things and had no relationship with the investigation of the case.

However, when the trial began, obviously, considering that I had a good relationship with IAGODA, on the instructions of the leadership of the People's Commissariat I was present at all court proceedings and during the intervals played chess with IAGODA.

During the trial, or rather during breaks in the trial, IAGODA often asked me whether they would shoot him or not.

I am also aware that before the trial IAGODA was granted a visit with his wife Averbakh. And even earlier, as directed by the leadership of the People's Commissariat, I repeatedly told IAGODA that his wife was at liberty, when in reality she had been arrested.

Therefore, before the meeting, IAGODA'S wife was given a change of clothing and was made to look so that the impression was created that she had come to the visit not from prison but as though she were at liberty. For this camouflage a hairdresser was specially invited, who dressed her up, put matching outfits on her and returned to her wristwatch which had earlier been taken from her.

From the words of the former head of the Leningrad Region UNKVD LITVIN I know that IAGODA was shot last, and before that he and

BUKHARIN were seated on chairs and forced to watch as the sentence was carried out on the other convicted prisoners."

After his conviction RAKOVSKY told his cellmates: "I coordinated the main points of my speech at the trial, my last words with the investigators... During this last period they were all at my service, right up to the olives." (Arch. case number 300956, v. 7, l.d. 325)

This story of RAKOVSKY's is fully confirmed in archival documents of the NKVD. Moreover, they show that this situation occurred not only in relation to RAKOVSKY but also in relation to other defendants in the present case.

So, in archival files on RAKOVSKY and GRIN'KO we have found typewritten outlines of their future confessions at trial. By comparing these outlines with the confessions that RAKOVSKY and GRIN'KO gave at trial it was revealed that they are identical both structurally and in their meaning, and that some phrases in them are repeated almost word for word in the trial transcript.

Moreover, in these archival materials we have also discovered drafts of the "last words" of the accused RAKOVSKY, RYKOV and GRIN'KO, and in the materials on RAKOVSKY even two versions of "his" last words at the trial have turned up.

As has been established by the verification, the falsification of documents of the investigation file was not limited to the investigation but continued at trial.

In the archives of the Committee of State Security [KGB] of the Council of Ministers of the USSR there has been found a deciphered transcript of the trial in the case of the anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites with various handwritten corrections and insertions.

The study of this transcript and comparison of it with the official text of the trial transcript shows that the testimony recorded in court was subsequently changed, in some cases, and that moreover these changes in some cases were in the nature of amplification and distortion of the testimony of the defendants.

Thus, the testimony of the defendant BESSONOV about his meeting with TROTSKY in 1934 when corrected was augmented by the following phrase: "TROTSKY said that he knew me very well by the letters of PIATAKOV and by what N.N. KRESTINSKII has said," by which not only was the substance of the testimony of BESSONOV changed, but it directly indicates on the part of TROTSKY contact with PIATAKOV and KRESTINSKII about which in this instance BESSONOV did not even testify.

During the interrogation of IAGODA at the trial the question of his guilt in the murder of KUIBYSHEV was not at all explained, as can be seen from the transcript...

However, the transcript was filled out as follows: "VYSHINSKII. Do you plead guilty in the organization of the murder of KUIBYSHEV?

IAGODA. I do."

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In his last words the accused RYKOV said:

"...I had a conversation in 1935 with KOTOV, who headed terrorist organizations in Moscow."

As a result of adjustments that phrase in RYKOV'S last words was recorded as follows: "In 1935 I gave the job of to KOTOV, who led the terrorist organizations in Moscow."

These same editors removed from the transcript RYKOV'S statement that SHARANGOVICH became known to him as a member of counterrevolutionary organization only at the trial.

Changes of a similar character were also made in the testimony of others, and then this distorted transcript, endorsed by Deputy Prosecutor of the USSR Roginskii, was published as the official text of the transcript of the trial of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court.

Due to the established facts of the gross violation of law in the investigation of the case of the Right-Trotskyist center both during the preliminary investigation and in court, it is worth noting that all the defendants who remained alive afterwards retracted their confessions and spoke about the trial as having been falsified by the investigation and the trial. All of them (RAKOVSKY, BESSONOV and PLETNEV) were shot on September 11, 1941 by verdict of the Military Collegium, which flagrantly violated the law and rendered this verdict not only without calling the accused into court but even without having any file on the charges against them.

Thus, as a result of the analysis of all the materials of the case and the additional verification it can be affirmed that the majority of the persons convicted in the present case did at one time take an active part in oppositional struggle but that, however, the accusation against them that in the following years they created a bloc of Rights and Trotskyites and conducted organized anti-Soviet activities, is falsified and in this regard they are subject to rehabilitation.

Some circumstances charged against individual defendants, for example, the involvement of ZUBAREV, ZELENSKII and IVANOV in the Tsarist secret police, and the nationalist activities of IKRAMOV and KHODZHAEV, etc., are subject to additional verification.

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