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Publisher's note to the fourth edition

This new edition of *The Stalin School of Falsification* is being brought out just as it was originally published in 1937 under Trotsky's supervision, with new typography and a new cover. We have added to this edition Trotsky's 1932 article "On the Suppressed Testament of Lenin." It is included as an appendix following the Explanatory notes.

Steve Clark

APRIL 2004

Foreword to the American edition

The Moscow Trials, which so shocked the world, signify the death agony of Stalinism. A political régime constrained to use such methods is doomed. Depending upon external and internal circumstances, this agony may endure for a longer or shorter period of time. But no power in the world can any longer save Stalin and his system. The Soviet régime will either rid itself of the bureaucratic shell or be sucked into the abyss.

This volume does not deal with the Moscow trials, to which my new book, *The Crimes of Stalin*, is wholly devoted. The Moscow juridical amalgams did not, however, fall from the sky, but were the inexorable products of the past, first of all, that is, of the “Stalin school of falsification.” The present volume will, I believe, prove of assistance to everyone who seeks to understand the ideological and political genesis of the Moscow trials. Without possessing the knowledge of its genesis, it is in general impossible to understand anything in this world, including a frame-up.

To enter now into a theoretical controversy with the Stalinists would be a complete anachronism. These people—and I have in mind of course the leaders and not the duped and befuddled followers—have completely and decisively broken with Marxism and are veering convulsively from one empirical formula to another, accommodating themselves to the needs of the Soviet ruling caste. But it remains an incontestable historical fact that the preparation of the bloody judicial frame-ups had its inception in the “minor” historical distortions and “innocent” falsification of citations. The bureaucracy found it indispens-

ably necessary to adapt Bolshevism to its own needs. This could not be done otherwise than by corroding the soul of Bolshevism. To the revolutionary essence of Bolshevism the bureaucracy gave the name of "Trotskyism." Thus it created the spindle on which to wind in the future its falsifications in all the spheres of theory and practice.

In the political sphere, the initiative in this work—it is impermissible to slur over this in silence—was assumed by the deceased Zinoviev, the herald of the struggle against Trotskyism from 1923 to 1925. But already at the end of 1925, Zinoviev became frightened by the consequences of his own initiative and came over to the ranks of the Opposition. What happened thereafter is only too well known. In the *economic* sphere, the theoretical weapons against Trotskyism were forged by Bukharin: "the underestimation of the peasantry," "super-industrialization," etc. The fate of Bukharin is no less well known: the official champion of pure Leninism was soon proclaimed a "bourgeois liberal," was later pardoned and is now in jail awaiting trial.

The most prominent place in the struggle against "Trotskyism" was accorded to *historical questions*. These involved both the history of the development of Russia as a whole, as well as the history of the Bolshevik party and the October Revolution, in particular. The deceased M.N. Pokrovsky must unquestionably be acknowledged as the most authoritative Soviet historian. For a number of years, he waged, with a vehemence peculiar to him, a struggle against my general views on the history of Russia and especially my conception of the October Revolution. Everything written by the other "communist" critics on this theme was merely a parroting of the ideas of Pokrovsky. While taking due cognizance of the erudition, conscientiousness and talent of the deceased scholar, it is impermissible not to state that Pokrovsky failed to master the method of Marxism, and instead of providing an analysis of the continued interaction of all the elements in the historical process, he provided for each occasion mechanistic constructions *ad hoc*, without bothering about their dialectic inter-connection. A few years

ago such an appraisal sounded like blasphemy. Pokrovsky was the supreme authority of Soviet science. The reign of his school was absolute. His textbooks or the textbooks of his disciples circulated in millions of copies. Shortly before his death, he was idolized as the lawgiver in the domain of scientific thought. But already in 1935, steps were taken suddenly and all the more drastically to review his heritage. In the course of a few months, Pokrovsky was completely cashiered, crushed and discredited. He probably escaped the prisoners' dock only by his timely demise. It would naturally be absurd to expect that Pokrovsky's school has been liquidated in the interests of Marxism. No, Pokrovsky is accused of lacking patriotism, of irreverence toward Russia's past, of lacking national pride!

In what did Stalin's own theoretical work express itself? In nothing. All he did was to exploit his fellow-traveler theorists, in the interests of the new ruling caste. He will enter into the annals of the history of "thought" only as the organizer of the greatest school of falsification. But for this very reason Stalin, more truly and completely than anybody else, expresses the ideological physiognomy of the new ruling stratum. Each theoretical formula of anti-Trotskyism (whether it involved Zinoviev, Bukharin or Pokrovsky) became at the very next stage an intolerable burden to the new masters of the situation. Official "theory" is today transformed into a blank sheet of paper on which the unfortunate theoreticians reverently trace the contours of the Stalinist boot. Retreating with seven league strides from its Bolshevik past, the bureaucracy at first devoured at each successive stage its own theoreticians. Nowadays that is no longer adequate. The bureaucracy cannot be reconciled with anything but the destruction of the entire old generation of Bolsheviks. Such is the consummation of the Soviet Thermidor!



This volume contains no little material for the political characterization of the four most prominent men in the last two

Moscow trials: Zinoviev-Kamenev, on the one hand; Radek-Piatakov on the other. The previous aberrations in politics and theory of both these couples act to facilitate in the extreme the understanding of their conduct in court, just as, on the other hand, the judicial trials cast a livid light on the preceding zig-zags of these unfortunate victims of the G.P.U.

Zinoviev and Kamenev were the initiators of the struggle against me in 1923. Piatakov and Radek—the former by three-quarters, the latter by half—stood in the camp of the Opposition. In 1926, Zinoviev and Kamenev joined the Opposition; at the same time, Radek and Piatakov became stauncher in their oppositional credo. In November 1927, Zinoviev and Kamenev turned to the path of capitulation. They were followed first by Piatakov, and then by Radek.

The spectre of Trotskyism was first pushed forward by the “triumvirate” (Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin) in 1924. In 1926, Zinoviev, at a meeting of the Opposition center, told how the “triumvirate” had decided to revive artificially the old, pre-revolutionary, long-forgotten differences between Lenin and myself in order, by using the spectre of Trotskyism as a cover, to wage a struggle against Trotsky. This story of Zinoviev is corroborated by the letters of Radek (December 25, 1927) and Piatakov (January 2, 1928) which the reader will find in this volume. Both these letters were written in the days when Zinoviev and Kamenev, to justify their capitulation, were once again pushing forward the spectre of Trotskyism which they themselves had already exposed, while Radek and Piatakov were still seeking to maintain their old positions. But in the course of the very next year, Piatakov and after him Radek, too, found themselves compelled to resort to the official legend of Trotskyism, so as to prepare and justify their own capitulation. In these instances of ideological demoralization was reflected the growing social pressure of the bureaucracy.

The old accusations (“permanent revolution,” “underestimation of the peasantry,” etc.) proved altogether inadequate for the purpose of crushing the Opposition and, later, of root-

ing it out physically. There ensued an epoch of criminal amalgams, at first petty and partial, and later ever more monstrous. The series of recantations of Zinoviev-Kamenev, growing in geometric progression, brought them in August, 1936 to the prisoners' dock, charged with the assassination of Kirov, *i.e.*, a crime with which they certainly had less connection than Stalin himself. In the days of the trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev, Radek and Piatakov rushed into print with exceptionally revolting articles in which, pretending a belief in the indictment, they demanded death for the accused. But soon thereafter, both of them found themselves in the prisoners' dock and were compelled to make confessions infinitely surpassing in monstrosity the fictitious crimes of Zinoviev-Kamenev. Conclusion? To play tricks with history is impermissible, especially in an epoch of great shocks and convulsions.



But how can one believe—naïve people will say—that Stalin was capable of such a frightful frame-up, that he was able to find for this frame-up a staff of executives, including the accused themselves, and did not, at the same time, meet with any resistance either on the part of his closest associates or in the judicial apparatus? Only those can be astonished by it who were asleep during the preceding evolution of the U.S.S.R. The process of handpicking and training the apparatus in the spirit of the Stalin school of falsification has already endured for fourteen years. Even though in fragmentary form, this book contains numerous authentic documents which serve to characterize the different stages of the subjugation of the party, the corruption of the apparatus and the poisoning of the conscience of the ruling stratum, in the name of a "monolithism" that is false through and through. The innumerable theoretical forgeries and historical frame-ups, referred to in these pages, represent in essence nothing but a series of designs and sketches for those hellish frescoes with which Stalin has shocked the con-

science of the entire world. Control Commissions, as far back as 1924, got used to demanding false confessions from former Oppositionists. Emulating Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek and Piatakov, many thousands of capitulators got used to issuing false statements. The papers carried articles dealing with these statements, which neither the authors nor the informed readers believed in for an instant. In each new edition of Lenin's *Collected Works*, the notes were subjected to a drastic revision: the minuses were replaced by pluses, the pluses by minuses. In encyclopædias and other reference books, the biographies were made over anew every year or so and events were delineated in a new manner—for the sake of exalting some while demoting others. Thousands of writers, historians and economists in the U.S.S.R. write by command what they do not believe. Professors in universities and school teachers are compelled to change written textbooks in a hurry in order to accommodate themselves to the successive stage of the official lie. The spirit of the Inquisition thoroughly impregnating the atmosphere of the country feeds, as we have already said, from profound social sources. To justify their privileges the ruling caste perverts the theory which has as its aim the elimination of all privileges. The lie serves, therefore, as the fundamental ideological cement of the bureaucracy. The more irreconcilable becomes the contradiction between the bureaucracy and the people, all the ruder becomes the lie, all the more brazenly is it converted into criminal falsification and judicial frame-up. Whoever has not understood this inner dialectic of the Stalinist régime will likewise fail to understand the Moscow trials.

The death agony of Stalinism signifies the death agony of the Comintern. This international organization is now the main internal obstacle in the path of the emancipation of the working class. The selection of people without honor and without conscience has reached the same appalling proportions in the Comintern as in the state apparatus of the U.S.S.R. The "leaders" by special appointment change their "convictions" upon instructions by telegraph. They organize campaigns of vilifica-

tion against Zinoviev who used to be their infallible authority, against Bukharin whom they used to acclaim as their leader, against Radek whom only yesterday they reverently cited in the struggle against Trotskyism. The functionaries of the Comintern represent in all relations—theoretical, political and moral—a type which is the polar opposite of the revolutionist. They hang on to Stalin, who in turn needs them for the maintenance of his tyranny in the U.S.S.R. The Moscow trials reveal to the very bottom the inner rottenness of the Comintern. After an initial period of bewilderment and vacillation, its swift disintegration is inevitable. It may take place much sooner than the collapse of the Stalinist system in the Soviet Union. The Second International has contrived in a number of countries to establish intimate connections with the Comintern in the period of its complete degeneration. The collapse of the Comintern must inevitably deal a cruel blow to the social democracy. But this does not mean that the world proletariat will be left without leadership. At the cost of terrible defeats and sacrifices, the main responsibility for which falls upon the Soviet bureaucracy, the proletarian vanguard will find its historic road. Ever more confidently will it rally its ranks under the banner of the Fourth International, which is already rising today on the shoulders of its predecessors.

Leon Trotsky

MARCH 3, 1937