
The Zinoviev-Kamenev Trial.

by Alexander Bittelman

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The trial of Zinoviev-Kamenev and of the Trotsky-Gestapo agents, which took place in Moscow, is of tremendous importance.†

For one thing, the conspirators and assassins did not succeed in their dastardly plans. And every friend of the Soviet Union, every decent human being, will bless the Soviet authorities for their vigilance and energy in discovering in time the conspiracy and checking it.

Every friend of human decency, let alone anti-fascists, Socialists, trade unionists, will give a sigh of relief at learning that the conspirators, excepting their “master mind,” Trotsky, were safely disposed of and were unable to carry through their murderous plans.

Under the guidance of Trotsky, they adopted the way of assassination and murder of the lead-

ers of the people in order, as they say, to overthrow the Soviet government. They couldn't, of course, succeed in overthrowing the Soviet government. This they must have felt in their corrupted hearts. But they might have succeeded in assassinating some of its leaders — our leaders, the pride and path-blazers of the oppressed throughout the world.

They did succeed in assassinating Kirov. And Kirov is no more.

But this time they did not succeed. And blessed be the power of the Soviet people that brought this about.

Some are wondering how the hand even of degenerated Zinoviev and of a counterrevolutionary Trotskyite could raise itself against Stalin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich?

†- The “Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center,” the first of the three great Soviet show trials of the late 1930s, was held in Moscow from August 19-24, 1936. The most prominent names among the 16 defendants tried in tandem were former members of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and the Council of Peoples' Commissars Grigoriï Evseievich Zinoviev and Lev Borisovich Kamenev, who were accused of engaging in a long-running terrorist conspiracy. The alleged plot detailed by the prosecution may be outlined as follows: From the fall of 1931, helpless in its political isolation, the underground Trotskyist organization moved towards the tactic of individual terrorism against leaders of the Stalin faction. This change of line from political struggle to personal terrorism is said to have been delivered verbally by Trotsky's son, Lev Sedov, to Ivan Smirnov in Berlin. The instructions were then personally relayed back to Russia by Smirnov. In the middle of 1932, a decision was made on the ground in Russia to unite the weak underground Trotskyist and Zinovievist organizations in order to increase the underground's combined strength, a decision which was confirmed by Trotsky in a letter back to Russia that fall. A secret “United Center” combining key members of the Trotskyist and Zinovievist undergrounds was organized in the summer of 1932, meeting at Kamenev and Zinoviev's dacha at Ilinskoe in accordance with this strategy. Discussion about the need for terrorist action was begun. Preparations were said to have been disrupted from late 1932 through the middle of 1933 by Zinoviev and Kamenev's implication in the “Riutin Case,” which cast a shadow over them necessitating a go-slow approach. In the summer of 1934, a secret conference was held at Kamenev's Moscow apartment at which Leningrad and Moscow terrorist cells were formed and the decision was made to “expedite the assassination of S.M. Kirov.” Leningrad terrorist groups were put on the case shadowing Kirov as they “waited for an opportune moment to commit their terroristic act.” Zinoviev and Kamenev are said to have transmitted the instruction to the assassin Leonid Nikolaev to shoot Kirov via verbal directions delivered by Ivan Bakaev, also a defendant at the trial. Trotsky is said to have communicated further written instructions (by means of invisible ink in a German cinema magazine) in October 1934 to “accelerate the assassination of Stalin and Voroshilov.” The terrorist conspiracy is said to have managed to kill Kirov but not Stalin, Voroshilov, or any other ranking member of the Soviet elite. The group continued to function “up to 1936,” according to Zinoviev's testimony at the trial. All 16 defendants in this trial were sentenced to death and executed shortly thereafter and their property confiscated by the state.

Well, some of their agents couldn't; and committed suicide rather than carry out the assassination orders of their "masters," Zinoviev and Trotsky.

But it is well to remember that the hand of a counterrevolutionary assassin was raised also against Lenin; and it was the hand of a "Socialist-Revolutionary."

Now the party of the Socialist-Revolutionaries was a revolutionary petty-bourgeois party fighting against tsarism. As a party it became counterrevolutionary when the Socialist Revolution began to mature. As a party, it then joined hands with the monarchists and foreign intervention to defeat the Socialist Revolution. And when this took place the rest followed as a matter of course. The worst elements of this counterrevolutionary party undertook to strike at the Socialist Revolution by trying to assassinate its head. Hence they struck at Lenin.

Trotskyism developed from an opposition to Lenin within the Bolshevik Party into the vanguard of bourgeois counterrevolution against the Soviet Union. When this happened the rest had to follow. This is no fatalism. It is merely pointing to the inescapable logic of a political position.

More than that: when fascism raised its ugly head and the struggle for socialism in the capitalist world became a struggle between the camp of democracy and the camp of fascism, between reaction and progress, between peace and war, Trotskyism inevitably became an ally of fascism.

Yes, some say, that may be so objectively, as a result of Trotskyite policies; but does it follow that Trotsky *wanted* to help the fascists? Does it follow that he had to resort to assassination when, as he claims, in his entire career he was against the use of individual terror?

The answer to this is: as a result of the facts brought out at the trial, Trotskyism today stands exposed not only as an ally of fascism objectively but as a current in fascism. *Trotskyism today is fascism.*

In this "transformation" of Trotskyism there is nothing especially new. It is no news that certain ideologists of petty-bourgeois "revolutionism" have turned fascist. Mussolini is an outstanding case. And as to Trotsky's career, it is precisely three that the key will be found to his present transformation into a fascist terrorist.

Lenin had shown long ago that Trotskyism as a political current was never anything else but petty-bourgeois "revolutionism." And as such, it always could become transformed (almost overnight) into the handmaiden of the wildest capitalist reaction. Trotskyism was always "Left phrases and Right deeds." This had its logic.

Trotsky is a mortal enemy of the socialist successes of the Soviet Union. Zinoviev and Kamenev were working with Trotsky. But their counterrevolutionary fight failed. Socialism triumphed and with it Soviet democracy as demonstrated by the new Constitution. The Soviet people stood united as never before around their government and the Communist Party and around Stalin.

What was Trotsky's answer to that? Redoubled incitement against the leaders of the Soviet Union, especially the world leader of the camp of socialism and progress, Comrade Stalin. Incitement that was already carrying within itself the kernels of incitement to assassination. And these kernels came pretty soon to maturity.

Seeing the hopelessness of his counterrevolutionary efforts among the masses, Trotsky begins to unfold a line which, though still indirectly, openly calls for assassination. In an article entitled "The New Constitution of the USSR," published in the *New Militant* on May 9 [1936], Trotsky writes:

"...At the dawn of the Soviet power the terrorist acts were perpetrated by the S-Rs and the Whites in the atmosphere of the still unfinished civil war. When the former ruling classes abandoned all their hopes, terrorism disappeared as well. Kulak terror, traces of which are observable even now, was always local in character, and was an accompaniment of the partisan war against the Soviet regime. This is not what

Molotov had in mind. *The new terror does not lead upon the old ruling classes or the kulaks. The terrorists of recent years are recruited exclusively from among the Soviet youth, from the ranks of the YCL and of the Party. While utterly impotent to solve those tasks which it set itself, individual terror is, however, of the greatest symptomatic importance because it characterizes the sharpness of the antagonism between the bureaucracy and the wide masses of the people, especially the younger generation. Terrorism is the tragic accompaniment of Bonapartism.*

In print, publicly, Trotsky “only” gives justification for assassination. Through his agents and secretly, as now disclosed at the trial, Trotsky gives orders to assassinate.

Publicly and in print both Trotsky and Goebbels denounce the new Soviet Constitution. Goebbels calls it “tyranny”; Trotsky calls it “Bonapartism.”

Secretly both Trotsky and Goebbels’ friend, Himmler, the head of the Gestapo, fit out false passports and other equipment for Trotskyists to enter the Soviet Union to assassinate Soviet leaders.

These are facts. And these established facts spell out one thing:

Trotskyism is fascist terrorism.

We want to hope that the Socialist Party, invaded as it has become by Trotskyism, will find within itself enough proletarian and socialist strength to draw the proper conclusions from this fact.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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