



Leon Trotsky on
The Kirov
Assassination

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INTRODUCTION

We are republishing this pamphlet, written by Trotsky at the end of 1934. It has long been out of print and was so rare that it had become a collector's item.

The subject matter treated is not only of great historic value but has become topical following the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in February, 1956. At the Congress Stalin's successors repudiated twenty years of his rule and have since been revealing his crimes, one after another.

Although they now reveal these crimes, Stalin's heirs fail to explain his rise to power or his bloody regime. By implication they attribute his crimes to a paranoid reaction to the Kirov assassination.

Kirov, one of Stalin's henchmen, became the head of the Leningrad Communist Party after the defeat of the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky. His assassin, Nicolaiev, was an obscure employee in the Soviet apparatus. What motivated Nicolaiev in his act has not been revealed by the Kremlin to this day. Stalin, however, seized on this event to intensify his terror against all opposition in the Soviet Union and rise to absolute power.

May 1, 1956

Translated by

John G. Wright

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The Stalinist Bureaucracy and the Assassination of Kirov

*A Reply to Friends in America**

1. A Grandiose "Amalgam"

The assassination of Kirov has remained a complete mystery for several weeks. At first, the official dispatch referred only to the execution—as an immediate repressive measure—of some scores of terrorists from among White émigrés arriving via Poland, Roumania, and other border states. The conclusion one naturally drew was that the assassin of Kirov belonged to the same counter-revolutionary terrorist organization. On December 17, a dispatch was issued stating for the first time that Nicolaiev had previously belonged to the opposition group of Zinoviev in Leningrad in 1926. The dispatch itself revealed very little. The entire Leningrad organization of the party, with only a few exceptions, was part of the Zinoviev opposition in 1926 and was represented at the 14th Party Congress by a delegation consisting entirely or almost entirely of erstwhile Zinovievists who are today under arrest. Subsequently they all capitulated with their leader at the head; then they repeated their capitulation in a much more decisive and humiliating manner. They were all reinstated into the Soviet apparatus. The information that Nicolaiev—whose name reveals nothing to anyone—had at one time taken part in the Zinoviev group implies hardly more than the fact that Nicolaiev in 1926 was a member of the Leningrad organization of the party.

It was clear, however, that this information relating to the "Zinoviev group" was not issued by accident; it could imply nothing else but the preparation of a jural "amalgam", that is to say, a consciously false attempt to implicate in the assassination of Kirov individuals and groups who did not and could not have anything in common with the terrorist act. This is no new method. Let us recall that as early as 1927 the G.P.U. sent one of its official agents

*A group of friends cabled to Comrade Trotsky requesting him to give his opinion on the Kirov assassination. The article we are publishing herewith is Trotsky's answer to this request.—Eds.

who had formerly fought in the Wrangel army to a young man, unknown to everybody, who was distributing the documents of the Opposition. And then the G.P.U. accused the entire Opposition of maintaining relations . . . not with the G.P.U. agent, but with a "Wrangel officer". Hired journalists immediately transmitted this amalgam to the Western press. At the present time the same procedure is being employed, only on an infinitely larger scale.

On December 27, the T.A.S.S. [Telegraphic Agency of the Soviet Union] opened wide the parenthesis of the amalgam by transmitting facts of a particularly sensational character. Aside from the unknown individuals brought to justice in Leningrad for the act of the terrorist Nicolaiev, fifteen members of the old "anti-Soviet" group of Zinoviev were arrested in Moscow in connection with this same affair. The T.A.S.S. even here states, it is true, that concerning seven of the arrested there are not "sufficient facts to hand them over to justice", wherefore they were handed over to the Commissariat of Internal Affairs for the purpose of administrative repression. Let us enumerate the fifteen party members who according to the T.A.S.S. were arrested in Moscow, in connection with the Nicolaiev affair:

1. Zinoviev—Lenin's collaborator for many years in exile; former member of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau; former Chairman of the Communist International and of the Leningrad Soviet;

2. Kamenev—Lenin's collaborator in exile for many years; former member of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau, Vice-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Chairman of the Council of Labor and Defense and of the Moscow Soviet: these two men together with Stalin composed the governing "troika" (triumvirate) during 1923-25;

3. Zalutsky, one of the oldest worker-Bolsheviks, former member of the Central Committee, former secretary of the Leningrad Committee, Chairman of the first Central Commission for the purging of the party;

4. Yevdokimov, one of the oldest worker-Bolsheviks, former member of the Central Committee and the Organization Bureau, one of the leaders of the Leningrad Soviet;

5. Feodorov, one of the oldest worker-Bolsheviks, former member of the Central Committee, Chairman of the Workers' Section of the Soviet during the October revolution;

6. Safarov, one of the oldest members of the party, arrived with Lenin in the "sealed" train, former member of the Central Committee, editor-in-chief of the Leningrad *Pravda*;

7. Kuklin, one of the oldest worker-Bolsheviks, former member of the Central Committee and the Leningrad Committee;

8. Bakaiev, one of the oldest worker-Bolsheviks, former member of the Central Control Commission, one of the outstanding participants in the civil war;

9-15. Sharov, Faivilovich, Vardin, Gorchenin, Boulak, Guertik, and Kostina—all of them old party members, militants during the period of illegality, participants in the civil war, who occupied the most responsible posts in the party and the Soviets—these fifteen individuals are implicated, no more, no less, in the assassination of Kirov and, according to explanations given by *Pravda*, they had as their aim the seizure of power, beginning with Leningrad, "with the secret intention of reestablishing the capitalist regime". Subsequent dispatches which have appeared in the Soviet press added to the fifteen arrested "Zinovievists" several more individuals of the same importance in the party.

Thus collapsed the first version according to which Nicolaiev was presented to the reading public as connected with the organization of White Guard émigrés who are sending in terrorists by way of Poland and Rumania. Nicolaiev becomes the *terrorist agent of an internal opposition in the party*, at the head of which there were to be found the former Chairman of the Communist International, Zinoviev, and the former Chairman of the Political Bureau, Kamenev, both of them Stalin's colleagues in the "troika". It is clearly to be seen why we have called the dispatch of the T.A.S.S. a colossal sensation. We can now also call it a colossal lie.

2. Are Zinoviev and Kamenev Terrorists?

There is not the slightest reason or motive for us to

defend the policies or the personal reputations of Zinoviev, Kamenev and their friends. They were at the head of that faction which inaugurated the struggle against Marxist internationalism under the name of "Trotskyism"; they were subsequently driven against the bureaucratic wall raised with their own efforts and under their own leadership; having taken fright at their own handiwork, they joined the Left Opposition for a brief period and revealed the frauds and falsehoods utilized in the struggle against "Trotskyism"; frightened by the difficulties of the struggle against the usurping bureaucracy, they capitulated; reinstated to the party, they substituted for principled opposition, sniping, secret machinations; they were again expelled—they capitulated for the second time.

They disavowed the banner of Marxism and camouflaged themselves, hoping to gain a place in the party which had been corrupted and strangled by the apparatus. Having generally lost esteem and confidence, and even the possibility of waging a struggle, they found themselves, in the end, cruelly punished. It is not our task to defend them!

But the Stalinist bureaucracy is not judging them for their real crimes against the revolution and the proletariat, because its own ranks consist to a large degree of abject turncoats, camouflaged individuals and careerists ready for anything. Once again the bureaucracy wishes to turn its deposed chiefs into scapegoats for its own transgressions. Zinoviev and Kamenev were lacking in character; but no one considered them fools or ignorant buffoons. The other thirteen above named Bolsheviks lived through the experiences of the Bolshevik party for 25-30 and more years. They could not suddenly turn to a belief in the utility of individual terror for changing the social regime, even were one to admit for a single moment the absurdity that they might have actually aspired to "reestablish the capitalist regime". Similarly, they could not have possibly thought that the assassination of Kirov, who, besides, played no independent role, could lead them to power. The American workers may more easily understand how insane is such an idea if they imagine for a moment the left wing opposition in the trade unions deciding to assassinate some right-hand man of Green, with

the aim of . . . seizing the leadership of the trade unions!

The dispatch of the T.A.S.S. itself admits, at least as regards seven of those arrested—Zinoviev, Kamenev, Zalusky, Yevdokimov, Feodorov, Safarov and Vardin—that they really had no connection with the Nicolaiev affair. But this admission is made in such a way that one can call it nothing but brazen. The dispatch speaks of “lack of proof”—as if there could generally be any proof of an accusation intentionally so false and improbable as is this accusation by its very essence. By making an artificial division into two groups of the old Bolsheviks arrested in Moscow and by declaring that for one of them there are insufficient proofs, the Stalinist clique seeks by this very thing to color its so-called investigation with a tinge of “objectivity” in order to hold in reserve the subsequent possibility for replacing the jural amalgam by an administrative amalgam.

As regards the real motives and circumstances of Nicolaiev's crime, we now learn from the dispatch of the T.A.S.S. as little as we knew before. The implication that Kirov may have been the victim of vengeance for depriving Zinoviev of leading posts in Leningrad is manifestly absurd. Eight years have since gone by. Zinoviev himself and his friends have had time enough to repent twice, the “grievances” of 1926 have long ago paled in the face of events of infinitely greater importance. It is clear that there must have been much more recent circumstances which drove Nicolaiev onto the road of terrorism, and that there must have been very serious reasons that impelled Stalin to venture on a monstrous amalgam which—regardless of whether or not it succeeds immediately to attain its practical goal—cruelly compromises the Soviet group in power.

3. Was the Purpose to Restore Capitalism?

The first question which must inevitably arise in the minds of all thinking workers is the following: How could it come to pass that at a time like this, after all the economic successes, after the “abolition”—according to official assurances—of classes in the U.S.S.R., and the “construction” of the socialist society—how could it come to pass that old Bolsheviks, the most intimate collaborators of Lenin, those

who shared power with Stalin, members of the "Old Guard", could have posed for their task the *restoration of capitalism*? Do Zinoviev, Kamenev and the others consider that the socialist régime is no boon to the masses? Or on the contrary, do they expect from capitalism personal advantages both for themselves and their descendants? And what sort of advantages?

Only utter imbeciles would be capable of thinking that capitalist relations, that is to say, the private ownership of the means of production, including the land, can be reestablished in the U.S.S.R. by peaceful methods and lead to the régime of bourgeois democracy. As a matter of fact, even if it were possible *in general*, capitalism could not be regenerated in Russia except as the result of a savage counter-revolutionary *coup d'état* which would cost ten times as many victims as the October revolution and the civil war. In the event of the overthrow of the Soviets their place could only be taken by a distinctly Russian Fascism, so ferocious that in comparison to it the ferocity of the Mussolini régime and that of Hitler would appear like philanthropic institutions. Zinoviev and Kamenev are no fools. They cannot but understand that the restoration of capitalism would first of all signify the total extermination of the revolutionary generation, themselves of course included. Consequently, there cannot be the slightest doubt here that the accusation concocted by Stalin against the Zinoviev group is fraudulent from top to bottom: both as regards the *goal* specified—restoration of capitalism; and as regards the *means*—terrorist acts.

4. Nicolaiev's Crime Is No Accidental Event

In any case, the fact remains that the leading bureaucratic group is not at all inclined to estimate Nicolaiev's crime as an isolated, and accidental phenomenon, as a tragic episode: on the contrary, it is investing this act with a political importance so exceptional that it does not stop at constructing an amalgam which compromises itself, nor even at placing all types of opposition, discontent and criticism on the same plane with terrorist acts. The goal of the maneuver is quite evident: to terrorize completely all critics and

oppositionists, and this time not by expulsion from the party nor by depriving them of their daily bread, nor even by imprisonment or exile, but by the firing squad. *To the terrorist act of Nicolaiev, Stalin replies by redoubling the terror against the party.*

The thinking workers of the entire world should ask themselves with the greatest anxiety the following question: Is it possible that the Soviet power is in so difficult a position that the leading stratum is compelled to resort to such monstrous machinations in order to maintain its equilibrium? This question leads us to a second one which we have posed time and again but to which we have never received the semblance of a reply. If it is correct that the dictatorship of the proletariat has for its task the crushing of the resistance on the part of the exploiting classes—and this is correct—then the weakening of the former ruling classes, and, so much more so, their “liquidation” concurrently with the economic successes of the new society, must necessarily lead to the mitigation and the withering away of the dictatorship. Why isn’t this so? Why is there to be observed a process of a directly opposite character? Why have we seen during the period of the two Five Year Plans the monstrous growth of the omnipotence of the bureaucracy which has led the party, the Soviets and the trade unions to complete submission and humiliation?

If one were to judge *solely* on the basis of the party and the political regime, one would have to say that the position of the Soviets grows manifestly worse, that the ever increasing pressure of bureaucratic absolutism expresses the growth of the internal contradictions which sooner or later must lead to an explosion with danger of the downfall of the whole system. Such a conclusion would be, however, one-sided and consequently, incorrect.

5. Socialism Has Not Yet Been Built; the Roots of the Classes Have Not Yet Been Extirpated

If we want to understand what is occurring, we must above all reject the official theory, according to which a classless socialist society is already established in the U.S.S.R. In fact, why was it necessary for the bureaucracy to

have complete power? Against whom? In reality, the "abolition" of classes by administrative decree does not suffice, it still remains necessary to overcome them economically. So long as the overwhelming majority of the population has not yet emerged from actual want, the urge for individual appropriation and for the accumulation of goods retains a mass character and comes into continual collision with the collectivist tendencies of the economic life. It is true that essentially this accumulation has consumption for its immediate goal; but if no vigilance is exercised, if the accumulation is permitted to exceed certain limits, it will transform itself into primitive capitalist accumulation, and can result in overthrowing the Kolkhozes, and after them the trusts as well. "Abolition of classes", in a socialist sense, means the guaranteeing to all members of society such living conditions as will kill the stimulus for individual accumulation. We are still very far from that. Were one to compute the national income per capita, especially that part of the national income which goes for consumption, the Soviet Union, despite the technological successes it has achieved, would still find itself at the tail-end of capitalist countries. The satisfaction of the essential elementary needs is always bound up with a bitter struggle of each against all, illegal appropriation, evasion of laws, cheating of the state, favoritism, and thievery on a mass scale. In this struggle, the role of controller, judge and executioner is assumed by the bureaucracy. It uses administrative pressure to compensate for the deficiency in economic power.

It is infantile to think that the omnipotence of the Soviet bureaucracy was necessitated by the struggle with the "remnants" of the exploiting classes in the socialist society. Indeed, the historical justification for the very existence of the bureaucracy is lodged in the fact that we are still very far removed from socialist society: in the fact that the present transitional society is full of contradictions, which in the sphere of consumption, the most immediate and vital sphere for everyone, bears a character of extreme tension, and always threatens to cause an explosion in the sphere of production. The collectivization of peasant economy has tapped new and colossal sources of power for the bureau-

crazy. It is precisely in rural economy that questions of consumption are bound up most intimately with questions of production. That is why the collectivization has led, in the village, to the need of guarding by the severest methods of repression the property of the collectives against the peasants themselves.

This entire intense struggle has not a clear-cut and open class character. But potentially, as regards the possibilities and dangers latent in it, it is a class struggle. The régime of the dictatorship is therefore not only the heritage of previous class struggles (with the feudal landlords and the capitalists), as the Stalinists would have it, a struggle which has been basically consummated, but also it is the instrument for preventing a new class struggle which is looming from out of the fierce competition between the interests involved in the sphere of consumption, on the basis of a still lagging and unharmonious economy. In this and in this alone rests the historical justification for the existence of the present Soviet dictatorship.

6. The Dual Role of the Bureaucracy

The Soviet bureaucracy, however, in the interests of its own domination and welfare, ruthlessly exploits its role of controller and regulator of the social contradictions, and its function of waging a preventive struggle against the regeneration of classes. It concentrates in its own hands not only the entire power but it consumes by hook and crook an enormous share of the national income. In this way it has succeeded in removing itself so far away from the masses of the population as to make it impossible any longer to permit any control whatever over its actions and its income.

Certain observers and superficial critics have declared the Soviet bureaucracy to be a new ruling class. The falsity of this definition from the Marxist standpoint has been amply clarified by us.* A ruling economic class presupposes a system of production and of property which is peculiarly its own. The Soviet bureaucracy is but a reflection of the transitional stage between two systems of production and

* Cf. Leon Trotsky, "The Soviet Union and the Fourth International," Pioneer Publishers.

of property, between the capitalist system and the socialist system. There can be no question of an independent development of this transitional regime.

The role of the Soviet bureaucracy remains a dual one. Its own interests constrain it to safeguard the new economic regime created by the October revolution against the enemies at home and abroad. This work remains historically necessary and progressive. In this work the world proletariat supports the Soviet bureaucracy without closing their eyes to its national conservatism, its appropriative instincts and its spirit of caste privilege. But it is precisely these traits which are increasingly paralyzing its progressive work. The growth of industry and the drawing of agriculture into the sphere of state planning complicate extraordinarily the tasks of the economic leadership. An equilibrium between the various branches of production and, above all, a correct balance between national accumulation and consumption can be achieved only with the active participation of the entire toiling population in the elaboration of the plans, the necessary freedom to criticize the plans, and the opportunity of fixing the responsibility and of recalling the bureaucracy from top to bottom. Unrestricted domination over the economy of 170 million people implies the inevitable accumulation of contradictions and crises. The bureaucracy extricates itself from difficulties arising from its mistakes by loading their consequences onto the shoulders of the toilers. The partial crises converge towards the general crisis which is creeping onward and which expresses itself in the fact that despite the titanic expenditure of energy by the masses and the greatest technological successes, the economic achievements keep lagging far behind, and the overwhelming majority of the population continues to lead a poverty-stricken existence. Thus *the singular position of the bureaucracy*, which is the result of definite social causes, *leads to an increasingly more profound and irreconcilable contradiction with the fundamental needs of Soviet economy and culture*. Under these conditions, the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, although it remains a distorted expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat, translates itself into a permanent political crisis. The Stalinist faction is com-

pelled ever anew to destroy "completely" the "remnants" of old and new oppositions, to resort to ever more violent methods and to place in circulation amalgams which become more and more envenomed. At the same time this very faction raises itself above the party and even above the bureaucracy itself. It openly proclaims the purely Bonapartist principle of the infallibility of a life-time leader. The sole virtue of a revolutionist to be recognized hereafter is fidelity to the leader. This demoralizing slavish philosophy of the bureaucracy is carried by the agents of the C. I. into its foreign sections.

7. The Two Series of Difficulties

Thus, we see that in the evolution of the Soviet Union up to the present stage, we must sharply differentiate between two series of difficulties, one of which flows from the contradictions of the transitional period, aggravated by the diseases of bureaucratism. These are the *fundamental* difficulties from which the entire Soviet organism suffers. The other series of difficulties has a *derivative* character and represents a danger not to the Soviet regime but to the dominant position of the bureaucracy and the personal rule of Stalin.

These two series of difficulties are of course interrelated, but are not at all identical. They are in a large measure opposed to one another, and the degree of their opposition is in a process of continual growth. The economic successes and the cultural progress of the population which were determined by the October revolution turn more and more against bureaucratic conservatism, bureaucratic license, and bureaucratic rapacity. Analogous processes are to be observed in the history of the development of various ruling classes in the past. The Czarist bureaucracy aided in the development of capitalist relations only to come subsequently into conflict with the needs of bourgeois society. The domination of the Soviet bureaucracy costs the country too dearly. The progress in technology and culture, the increasingly exacting demands and the increasingly critical attitude of the people automatically turn against the bureaucracy. The young generation begins to sense in a particularly painful manner the yoke of "enlightened absolut-

ism" which, besides, increasingly reveals the incapacity of its "shining lights". Thus conditions are created which clearly menace the rule of the bureaucracy which has outlived itself.

8. Individual Terrorism, a Product of Bureaucratic Decay

The foregoing enables us to reply to the question we posed at the beginning of the article. Is it possible that the situation in the Soviets is so bad that the governing group is forced to resort to machinations, dirty tricks and criminal amalgams which profoundly compromise it in the eyes of the world proletariat? We can now reply with a feeling of relief that it is a question not of the difficult position of the Soviets themselves but of the position of the bureaucracy, which is growing worse within the Soviets. Obviously the position of the Soviets is neither so rosy nor so magnificent as it is depicted by those false "Friends" who are not disinterested and who—let us keep it in mind—will betray the Soviet Union at the first sign of serious danger. But it is far from being so bad as might be concluded on the basis of those acts of shameful panic by the bureaucracy. The ruling group would never have consented to connecting the terrorist crime of Nicolaiev with the Zinoviev-Kamenev group if the Stalinists did not feel the ground slipping from under their feet.

Nicolaiev is depicted by the Soviet press as a participant in a *terrorist organization made up of members of the party*. If the dispatch is true—and we see no reason to consider it an invention, because the bureaucracy has not confessed it with an easy heart—we have before us a new fact which must be considered of great *symptomatic* significance. There is always the possibility that it was a chance shot fired by a man for personal reasons. But a terrorist act prepared beforehand and committed by order of a definite organization is, as the whole history of revolutions and counter-revolutions teaches us, inconceivable unless there exists a political atmosphere favorable to it. The hostility to the tops in power must have been widespread and must have assumed the sharpest forms in order that a terrorist group might crystallize out within the ranks of the party youth,

or more properly speaking, within its upper stratum, which is intimately connected with the lower and middle circles of the bureaucracy.

Essentially not only is this fact admitted but it is stressed in the official statements. We learn from the Soviet press that the blind hatred of the "children" was nourished by the criticism of the oppositionist fathers. The explanations of Radek and Co. sound like plagiarisms of the Czarist publicist, Katkov, who used to accuse the cowardly liberal fathers of provoking voluntarily or involuntarily the young generation to commit terrorist acts. It is true that the tops in power have this particular time chosen only the Zinoviev group from among the generation of fathers. But this is the line of least resistance for Stalin. In repressing the compromised groups Stalin wants to discipline the bureaucratic ranks which are disintegrating and which have lost their internal cohesion.

When a bureaucracy comes into a contradiction with the necessities of development, and with the consciousness of the class which has raised it to power, it begins to decompose and to lose faith in itself. The function of the leadership is concentrated in the hands of an ever narrowing circle. The others work by inertia, negligently, they think more of their personal affairs, they express themselves disdainfully within their own circles about the high authorities, they harbor liberal thoughts, and they grumble. Thus they indubitably undermine among their own youth the confidence in and the respect for the official leaders. If at the same time discontent is spreading within the masses of the people, for which the means of proper expression and an outlet are lacking, but which isolates the bureaucracy as a whole; if the youth itself feels that it is spurned, oppressed and deprived of the chance for independent development, the atmosphere for terroristic groupings is created.

Hypothetically, but with complete verisimilitude, we can reestablish, from what has been said, the role of the Zinoviev group. What depths of infamous stupidity are reached by the statement that it might have had any direct or indirect connection with the bloody deed of Smolny, with its preparation, and its political justification! Zinoviev and Kamenev

returned to the party with the firm intention of winning the confidence of those at the top and rising again into their ranks. But the general condition of the lower and middle bureaucracy with which they were joined prevented them from realizing their intentions. While in official declarations they paid their tribute to the "greatness" of Stalin in which they, less than anyone else, could believe, they became infected in their daily surroundings by the generally prevailing spirit, that is to say, they cracked jokes, retailed stories about Stalin's ignorance, etc. . . . The general secretary did not remain ignorant, indeed, of all this. Could Stalin have chosen a better victim than this group when the shots at Smolny impelled him to teach the vacillating and decomposing bureaucracy a lesson?

8. Individual Terrorism, a Product of Bureaucratic Decay

The negative attitude of Marxism towards the tactic of individual terror is known to every worker able to read and write. A great deal has been written on this question. I take the liberty of quoting here from an article of mine published in 1911, in German, in the Austrian periodical *Kampf*. Needless to say, it was then a question of the capitalist regime. In this article I wrote:

"Whether or not the terrorist act, even if 'successful', throws the ruling circles into turmoil, depends upon the concrete political circumstances. In any case such turmoil can only be of short duration; the capitalist state is not founded upon ministers and cannot be destroyed with them. The classes it serves will always find new men, the mechanism remains whole and continues its work.

"But the turmoil which the terrorist act introduces into the ranks of the toiling masses themselves is far more profound. If it is enough to arm oneself with a revolver to reach the goal, what need is there for the strivings of the class struggle? If people in high positions can be intimidated by the noise of an explosion, what need is there then for a party?"

To this article which counterposed to terrorist adventurism the method of preparing the proletariat for the socialist revolution, I can add nothing today, twenty-three

years later. But if Marxists categorically condemned individual terrorism, obviously for political and not mystical reasons, even when the shots were directed against the agents of the Czarist government and of capitalist exploitation, they will even more relentlessly condemn and reject the criminal adventurism of terrorist acts directed against the bureaucratic representatives of the first workers' state in history. The subjective motivations of Nicolaiev and his partisans are a matter of indifference to us. Hell itself is paved with the best of intentions. So long as the Soviet bureaucracy has not been removed by the proletariat, a task which will eventually be accomplished, it fulfills a necessary function in the defense of the workers' state. Should terrorism of the Nicolaiev type spread, it could, aided by new, unfavorable conditions, render service only to the Fascist counter-revolution.

Only political fakers who bank on imbeciles would endeavor to link Nicolaiev with the Left Opposition, even if only in the guise of the Zinoviev group as it existed in 1926-27. The terrorist organization of the communist youth was fostered not by the Left Opposition but by the bureaucracy, by its internal corruption.

Individual terrorism is in its very essence bureaucratism turned inside out. For Marxists this law was not discovered yesterday. Bureaucratism has no confidence in the masses, and endeavors to substitute itself for the masses. Terrorism works in the same manner; it seeks to make the masses happy without asking their participation. The Stalinist bureaucracy has created a vile leader-cult, attributing to leaders divine qualities. "Hero" worship is also the religion of terrorism, only with a minus sign. The Nicolaievs imagine that all that is necessary is to remove a few leaders by means of a revolver in order for history to take another course. Communist terrorists, as an ideological grouping, are of the same flesh and blood as the Stalinist bureaucracy.

10. Bureaucratic Centrism, the Cause of the Collapse of the C.I.

By dealing this blow to the Zinoviev group Stalin, as we said, aimed at consolidating the ranks of the bureaucracy. But that is only one aspect of the matter. There is an-

other, and no less important side: *Using the Zinovievist group as a footstool, Stalin is aiming to strike a blow at Trotskyism.* And cost what it may, he must strike that blow. In order to understand the goal and the direction of this new stage of the struggle against "Trotskyism" it is necessary to consider—even though briefly—the international work of the Stalinist faction.

As regards the U.S.S.R., the role of the bureaucracy, as has already been said, is a dual one: on the one hand, it protects the workers' state with its own peculiar methods; on the other hand, it disorganizes and checks the development of economic and cultural life by repressing the creative activity of the masses. It is otherwise *in the sphere of the international working class movement*, where not a trace remains of this dualism; here *the Stalinist bureaucracy plays a disorganizing, demoralizing and fatal role from beginning to end.* Irrefutable evidence of this is the history of the C. I. during the last eleven years. We have made a study of this history in a series of writings. To our analysis there has not come a single word in answer from the Stalinists. Generally speaking, they do not care to learn their own history. They have not a single book, nor a single article which makes an attempt to draw the balance of the policies of the C. I. in China, India, England, Germany, Austria and Spain during events of world-wide scope and importance.

No attempt has been made to explain why, under conditions of capitalist decay and of an entire series of revolutionary situations, the C. I., during the last 11 years, has known nothing save shameful defeats, political disgrace, and the atomization of its organization. Finally, why has it not dared during the past seven years to convoke a single world congress?

What is the balance sheet of the "workers' and peasants' parties" in the Orient? What were the fruits of the Anglo-Russian Committee? What has become of the celebrated Peasants' International? What about the theory of the "Third Period?" What has become of the program of "national liberation" for Germany? What was the fate of the great theory of "social-fascism"? and so forth . . . and so

on. . . . Each of these questions is bound up with a definite zigzag in the policies of the C. I., each of these zigzags has ended in an inevitable catastrophe. The chain of these catastrophes makes up the history of the Stalinist C. I. Its most recent zigzag, particularly in France, is a deplorable and fatal opportunist convulsion. It is obvious that such a chain of mistakes, confusion and crimes cannot be the result of individual or fortuitous causes, but results from general causes. These causes are lodged in the social and ideological qualities of the Stalinist bureaucracy as the leading stratum. *Bureaucratic Centrism* brought the Comintern to collapse. The Third International, like the Second, is doomed. No force can any longer save it.

Fundamentally, the Stalinist ruling group has given up the C. I. a long time ago. A most obvious proof of this is Stalin's refusal to convoke the world congress. Why bother? Nothing will come of it anyhow. Among themselves the Moscow bureaucrats explain the bankruptcy of the C. I. by the "non-revolutionary character" of the Western working class, and by the incapacity of the Western leaders. There is no need whatever to give the lie to this calumny of the world proletariat, especially after the recent events in Spain and Austria. As for the leaders of the communist parties abroad, Lenin as early as 1921 warned Zinoviev and Bukharin by letter: If you demand nothing but approbation in the C.I. you will surround yourselves exclusively with "docile imbeciles". Lenin liked to call a spade a spade. During the past eleven years the selection of "dolts" has attained a colossal success. As a necessary corollary to this, the political level of the leadership has fallen below zero.

11. The World-Wide Growth of Genuine Leninism Is a Dreadful Danger to Stalin

As already stated, the Kremlin has reconciled itself to the C. I. as a nonentity, by means of the theory of socialism in one country. The hopes based on the world proletarian revolution it has swapped for hopes in the League of Nations. Command has been issued to the communist parties abroad to conduct "realistic" policies which would succeed in destroying in a very short period of time whatever still

remains of the C. I. Stalin is already reconciled to all this. But it is impossible for him to become reconciled to *the regeneration of the world revolutionary movement under an independent banner*. Criticism of reformism may be renounced; blocs may be concluded with Radicals; the workers may be poisoned with the venom of nationalism and pacifism; but under no condition is it permissible for the international proletarian vanguard to obtain the opportunity for verifying freely and critically the ideas of Leninism through its own experience and to juxtapose Stalinism and the so-called Trotskyism in the broad light of day.

Since 1923, the entire ideology of the Soviet bureaucracy has been formed via the ever increasingly hostile repulsion of "Trotskyism". The starting point for each new zigzag was Trotskyism. And now that the terrorist blow of Nicolaiev is posing anew before the bureaucracy those very important political questions which it used to consider as solved once for all, it is trying once again to find, by means of the Zinoviev group, the culprit in the guise of Trotskyism, which is—as is very well known—the vanguard of the bourgeois counter-revolution, the ally of Fascism, and so on. Within the U.S.S.R. the bureaucracy has succeeded in establishing this version, to the extent that the masses are deprived of the possibility of verifying things for themselves, and since those who know the truth are reduced to silence. Precisely out of this stifled condition of the party there has originated the monstrous phenomenon of terrorism within the party. But danger is approaching stealthily, it has already drawn near, arriving from without, from the international arena. Those very ideas of Marx and Lenin which, as "counter-revolutionary Trotskyism", within the U.S.S.R., meet with the penalties of imprisonment, exile, and even the firing squad, are now becoming recognized on an increasingly wider scale, and with increasing clarity by the most conscious, active, and devoted elements of the vanguard of the world proletariat. The vile calumnies, which paid journalists, without honor or conscience, continue to repeat even now in the rags of the C. I., are provoking ever increasing indignation in the very ranks of the communist parties and are at the same time isolating the sections of the C. I. from

broad strata of the workers.

This prospect, let us repeat, no longer frightens Moscow. But another danger exists which is beginning to weigh like a nightmare on the Stalinist faction. The growing influence of the unfalsified ideas of Leninism in the working class movement of Europe and America cannot long remain a mystery to the workers in the U.S.S.R. It is possible to keep quiet, even if this is not easy, about the participation of the former Communist League of America in the Minneapolis strike; it is possible although difficult to maintain silence about the merger of the League with the American Workers Party; but when the confluence of events will take on a broader sweep and the revolutionary Marxists, the Leninists, will take a leading part therein, it will no longer be possible to keep quiet about these facts. The enormous danger which flows from this for the Stalinist faction is obvious. The entire structure of lies, calumnies, persecutions, falsifications and amalgams—the structure which has been uninterruptedly rising since Lenin's illness and death, will crumble upon the very heads of the engineers, that is to say, the calumniators and forgers. The Stalinists are blind and deaf to the perspectives of the world proletarian movement, but they have a very keen nose for the dangers which menace their prestige, their interests, and their bureaucratic privileges.

12. The Inevitability of New Amalgams Had Been Foretold

In my isolation, following in the press the gradual successes, slow but sure, of the ideas of genuine Leninism in America and Europe, I often remarked to friends that the moment is approaching when the principled "quality" of this international current will begin to transform itself into a mass "quantity"; this moment will respond in the ears of the Stalinists like a signal of mortal danger. It is one thing to crush the revolutionary Marxist grouping by the sheer weight of the bureaucratic apparatus during a period of revolutionary ebb, fatigue, disillusion and disintegration of the masses; it is another thing to free the world proletarian vanguard from the Stalinist quack-substitute for Bolshevism by the force of Marxist criticism. But that is precisely why

—that is exactly the way we have expressed it more than once in conversations and letters—the Stalinist tops cannot passively await the victory of Leninism. They must resort to “their measures”; certainly not measures of an ideological character; for here their impotence is so obvious that Stalin within these last few years has, generally speaking, stopped making pronunciamientos upon questions pertaining to the world workers’ movement. “His” measures, for Stalin, mean: increasing repressions, new amalgams of an increasingly monstrous kind, and finally an alliance with bourgeois police against the Leninists on the basis of mutual rendering of services.

Already, immediately after Kirov’s assassination, when the whole world was still convinced that it was a matter of a White Guard crime, one of my friends sent me from Geneva the circular letter devoted to the bloody deed of Smolny, issued by the International Secretariat of the League of Internationalist Communists. Referring to the protracted methods of the inquest, and to the extremely ambiguous tenor of the first communications from the Kremlin, the I. S. suggested in the postscript the following possibility: Is there perchance being prepared a colossal amalgam of some sort against the “Trotskyists” by the G.P.U.? The circular letter of the International Secretariat is dated December 10 and has undoubtedly circulated the world over. It is true that the I. S. itself made a reservation in the sense that the amalgam, although possible, was “somewhat improbable”. Nevertheless, the “improbable” has come to pass. When the first dispatch appeared in which Nicolaiev was said to have been a member of the Leningrad Opposition in 1926, there was no further room for doubt. The new campaign against Zinoviev and Kamenev was not long in following. At that moment, in a conversation with a friend, (I apologize for these personal details but they are necessary for the understanding of the psychological undercurrents in the case) I said, “The matter will not rest long on this plane, tomorrow they will bring Trotskyism to the fore.” To be able to make such a prediction, it was really not necessary to be a prophet. The issue of December 25 of the *Temps* which I received two or three days later con-

tained in a telegraphic dispatch from Moscow the following item: "We must point out . . . that as the days go by, Trotsky's name is being mentioned more and more often alongside of Zinoviev's."* Kirov's corpse and the Zinoviev group thus become preparatory steps for a much wider and bolder scheme: to deal a blow at international Leninism.

What must be the character of the *next* blow? This question has not been definitely decided, perhaps not even within the most intimate circle of the conspirators (Stalin-Yagoda-Yaroslavski and Co.). That largely depends upon the subsequent development of events. But one thing is clear: the conspirators lack neither the malevolent will nor the material means. The growth of international Leninism daily prods on their malevolent will; that is why it is impossible to exclude in advance *a single one of those hypotheses which flow from the very soil of the situation which has been created*. Whatever the course may be which will be drummed up by the march of events and by the creative imagination of Stalin and Yagoda, the preparation of "public opinion" will proceed along the line of a campaign concerning terrorist dangers on the part of the "Trotskyists" which menace the peace and order of Europe. *L'Humanité* has already made mention of a "terrorist group of—Trotskyists" in Leningrad. Lackeys always run ahead of their masters.

There is only one way to forestall enroute the amalgams which are in preparation: *Expose the scheme in advance*. The Stalinists are trying to mold the public opinion of the world police towards expulsions, extraditions, arrests, and other more decisive measures. The Leninists must prepare the public opinion of the world proletariat for these possible events. In this case, as in others, it is necessary to speak out openly what is: that is also the aim of the present article.

*The *Temps* which is very friendly to Stalin even emphasizes that among the arrested Zinovievists there is a known "Trotskyist", Yevdokimov. As a matter of fact, Yevdokimov is one of the original members of the Zinoviev group. He never was a "Trotskyist". Naturally, this does not change matters any, but we cannot avoid pointing out that petty falsifications of this type appearing in the friendly press. They are innumerable.

It would be criminal to deny the progressive work accomplished by the Soviet bureaucracy. With no initiative, with no horizons, with no understanding of the historical dynamic forces, the bureaucracy after a stubborn resistance, found itself compelled by the *logic of its own interests* to adopt the program of industrialization and collectivization. By its general level, by the character of its interests, the Stalinist bureaucracy is hardly superior to the bureaucracy of the American trade unions, but in contradistinction to the latter, its roots are imbedded in the nationalized means of production and it is compelled to safeguard and develop them. It has accomplished this task bureaucratically, that is to say, badly, but the work itself bears a progressive character. The initial, major successes along this road, which were not foreseen by the bureaucracy itself, have augmented its self-esteem, and consolidated it around the leader who incarnates in the most complete fashion the positive and negative traits of the bureaucratic stratum.

This "heroic" epoch of the bureaucracy is coming to a close. The bureaucracy has exhausted the internal resources of "enlightened absolutism". Further development of economic and cultural life demands the destruction of the bureaucracy by way of the regeneration of Soviet democracy. The bureaucracy resists desperately. In the struggle against the progressive needs of the new society, it must inevitably decompose. After the bureaucracy had strangled the internal life of the party, the Stalinist tops strangled the internal life of the bureaucracy itself. Henceforth only one thing is permissible: to glorify the "Great Leader", the "Beloved Chief". Out of this tissue of contradictions is emerging the "communist" terror against the bureaucratic tops.

The "internal" terror indicates in what a blind alley bureaucratism finds itself, but it does not at all show the way out of this impasse. No way out can be found except through the *regeneration of the Bolshevik party*. This problem can only be solved on an international scale. In order for the Russian workers to reject the opium of "socialism in one country" and to turn *en masse* toward the world socialist revolution, the world proletarian vanguard must consolidate itself around the banner of the Leninist party. The

struggle against reformism, more intransigent than ever, must be supplemented by the struggle against the paralyzing and demoralizing influence of the Stalinist bureaucracy upon the international working class movement. The defense of the Soviet Union is inconceivable without the struggle for the **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**.

LEON TROTSKY

December 28, 1934.

The Indictment

After the inevitable day's delay, I received the Paris newspaper *l'Humanité* of December 28, containing extracts from the indictment, with a statement by one Duclos. As both the extracts and the statement originate from the G.P.U. there is no need to enter into a discussion with hired lackeys. It will suffice for us to disclose the plans of their masters.

Just as one could have expected, the indictment doesn't mention the Zinoviev-Kamenev group by so much as a word. In other words: the initial amalgam fell apart into dust. However, concurrently it has fulfilled its task by psychologically preparing for another amalgam: in the indictment there emerges suddenly—suddenly for naive people—the name of Trotsky. Nicolaiev, the murderer of Kirov, was—according to his confession—in contact with a consul of a foreign power. During one of Nicolaiev's visits to the consulate, the consul gave him 5,000 roubles for expenses. Nicolaiev adds, "He told me that he can establish contact with Trotsky, if I give him a letter to Trotsky from the group." And that is all. *Period!* The indictment does not subsequently return to this episode. It must also be remarked that Nicolaiev made his first avowal concerning the foreign consul and his offer to transmit a letter to Trotsky only on the 20th day after his arrest. Manifestly, the examining magistrate was compelled to assist the terrorist's memory in the course of twenty days in order to extract from him such precious evidence! But let us skip that. Let us allow that the evidence is authentic. Let us moreover allow that the consul in question does actually exist in the

flesh. Let us allow that he established contact with a terrorist group (there have been such instances in history). But how and why does my name suddenly appear here? Is it, perhaps, because the terrorist group was seeking contact with Trotsky? No, even the G.P.U. does not dare to assert this. Perhaps Trotsky was seeking contact with the terrorist group? No, the indictment does not dare say this either. The consul himself was the one to assume the initiative and while giving Nicolaiev 5,000 roubles *on the eve of the terrorist act which was being prepared, he requested a letter addressed to Trotsky*. This is the sole deposition—a truly astounding piece of evidence made by Nicolaiev. The personality of the “consul” at once stands revealed in glaring light. The “consul” is wide-awake! The “consul” is at his post! The “consul” requires a tiny document, a letter from the terrorists financed by him to—Trotsky. Did the consul obtain this letter? One should imagine that this question would be of paramount importance. But it is precisely on this score that we cannot gather a single word from the indictment as it is printed in *l'Humanité*. Is it conceivable that neither the examining magistrate nor the prosecutor became at all interested in this fact? For, not the exploits of a consul unknown to anybody are of interest but the question of the *relations between the terrorists and Trotsky*. Were there such relations or no? Was the letter written and transmitted? Was a reply received? To these unavoidable questions we get no answer. Is that surprising? Only to naive people. The G.P.U. could not permit the prosecutor any indiscretion within that sphere over which it has been compelled to draw the curtain of silence.

One need not doubt for a moment that the letter was never written, because if the terrorists knew anything at all about Trotsky—and they couldn't but know—it was no secret to them that running like a red thread through my 37 years of revolutionary and literary activity (see several articles in my *Collected Works*, published by the State Publishing House) is my irreconcilable attitude towards the adventurism of individual terror. However, an admission that the terrorists could not have the slightest reason for

seeking contact with Trotsky, and for this reason did not respond to the kind offer of the "consul" would be tantamount to the immediate bungling of the entire amalgam. Best keep quiet about it. Let us, nevertheless, make momentarily an entirely improbable supposition; the eloquent provocateur did actually succeed in obtaining the letter which so interested him. But what happened to it? Of course the temptation would have been great to transmit such a letter to Trotsky and . . . to receive from him some sort of an encouraging answer for the Leningrad "supporters", even if without any reference to terror. But his inspirers, if not the consul himself, understood only too well the risk of such an enterprise: the previous attempts at provocation, which it is true, were on a smaller scale, ended in an inevitable fiasco. The letter—if it had been written, we repeat, contrary to all likelihood—would have to simply remain in the archives of the G.P.U. as a weapon unsuitable for its purposes. But this cannot be said aloud without confessing by this very fact that the consul is a second cousin to the Wrangel officer (see below).

Is it possible, however, to conceive of a consul in a role of an agent provocateur? We have no means at all of knowing whether a real or a fake consul is here concerned; the resources for fraud in the given instance are illimitable. But even genuine consuls bear very little resemblance to saints. Some of them engage in smuggling, illicit deals in currency and fall into the hands of the police (not only of the G.P.U. of course). Such a compromised consul may be offered not only forgiveness for his sins but also some entirely legal coin in addition, should he be so obliging as to perform a few trifling and innocent services. There were, there are, and there will be such cases . . . as long as there exist consuls, customs, currencies, intermediaries male and female, and police.

The version we have adduced which unfailingly flows from the indictment itself, if one is able to read it, *presupposes consequently that the G.P.U. itself, through the medium of an actual or fake consul, was financing Nicolaiev and*

*was attempting to link him up with Trotsky.** This version finds its indirect but very actual confirmation in the fact that all the responsible representatives of the G.P.U. in Leningrad were kicked out immediately after the assassination, and the investigation subsequently kept marking time for a protracted period, faced with the obvious difficulty of what variant to choose in order to explain what had happened. We do not mean to say that the G.P.U., in the person of its Leningrad agents, premeditated the murder of Kirov, we have no facts for such a supposition. But the agents of the G.P.U. knew about the terrorist act which was in *préparation*; they kept Nicolaiev under surveillance, they established contacts with him through the medium of trumped-up consuls for the double purpose of capturing as many persons as possible involved in the matter, and at the same time of attempting to compromise the political opponents of Stalin by means of a complex amalgam. Alas! an amalgam much too complex, as the subsequent course of events proved: before the "consul" had succeeded in preparing the political blast against Trotsky, Nicolaiev fired the shot at Kirov. After this, the organizers of the surveillance and the provocation were thrown headlong from their posts. And in writing the indictment, it became necessary to steer painstakingly around the sandbars and the submarine reefs, to leave the "consul" in the shade, to wipe away all traces of the activities of the G.P.U. and at the same time to save as much as possible of the shattered amalgam. The mysterious delay in the investigation thus finds an entirely natural ex-

*Trotsky's charge that the agents of the G.P.U. were implicated in the assassination of Kirov was met with the customary torrent of howls, abuse, derision and vicious counter-charges by the pen-prostitutes of Stalin. The *Daily Worker* struck its usual note. Within a fortnight, however, events substantiated Trotsky's charge. The *New York Times* for January 24, 1935 carried the following cable dispatch from Moscow: **12 in Secret Police Sentenced in Russia. F. D. Medved, Chief of Leningrad Unit, and 11 Aides Found Negligent in Kiroff Case.** The following extract from the cable will suffice: "The court found that most of these men, including M. Medved had failed to take measures to expose and end the activities of the 'counter-revolutionary terrorist Zinovieff group' in Leningrad and of the assassin of M. Kirov—Leonid Nicolaiev—although they were in a position to do so."—*Translator's note.*

planation. But why was the consul necessary? There was no getting along without the consul. The consul symbolizes the link between the terrorists, Trotsky and world imperialism (although the consul represented, one should imagine, some very petty and god-forsaken state: that is the least dangerous way). The consul is serviceable in another connection: out of "considerations of diplomacy" he cannot be named in the indictment nor consequently called as a witness. Thus, the mainspring of the combination remains behind the scenes. Finally, the consul himself—if he really exists in the flesh—runs no special risk: even if recalled by his government. Out of considerations of diplomatic politeness, he returns home as a distinguished hero who suffered in the service of his passionately loved fatherland; moreover, a certain supplementary sum to his modest salary would be found in his pocket for a rainy day, and there is no harm in that either.

The character of the machination is easiest understood if one is in the least bit acquainted with the preceding history of the behind-the-scenes struggle of Stalin against "Trotskyism". I shall mention only three instances. As early as 1927, hired journalists broadcasted through the entire world the report that the Left Opposition had been implicated in relations with . . . White Guards. We were bewildered. It turned out that the G.P.U. had sent one of its official agents to an 18 year old youth, unknown to anybody, and sympathetic to the Opposition, with an offer to assist in spreading Opposition literature. Some six to seven years previously the G.P.U. agent, it appears, served in the army of Wrangel (which, incidentally, was never verified). On this basis, Stalin publicly accused the Opposition of making a bloc with . . . not an agent of the G.P.U., but White Guards.

On the eve of my exile to Central Asia (Jan. 1928) a foreign journalist made me an offer, through Radek, to transmit secretly, if need be, a letter to my friends abroad. I expressed to Radek my conviction that the journalist was an agent of the G.P.U. However, I wrote the letter because I had nothing to say to my friends abroad that I could not repeat openly. The very next morning my letter was pub-

lished in *Pravda* as proof of my secret connections "with foreign countries".

On July 20, 1931, the yellow sheet, *Kurjer Codzienny*, of Cracow, published a gross forgery under the signature of Trotsky. Despite the fact that my literary works are banned on the pain of severest penalty in the U.S.S.R. (Blumkin was *shot* for attempting to bring in the *Bulletin of the Russian Opposition*), the article from the *Kurjer* was reprinted in the Moscow *Pravda*—in facsimile. The most elementary analysis proves that it was manufactured by the G.P.U., with the assistance of the well-known Yaroslavsky, and printed in the *Kurjer* (one should imagine at the regular advertising rates) only in order to be reproduced by *Pravda*.

I am compelled to leave aside a number of other combinations and amalgams which are more clarifying in order not to cause harm, by premature revelations, to other people involved. In any case, the type of this creative effort is clear from what has been said above. The triangle composed of Nicolaiev, the "consul" and Trotsky is not new. It resembles a dozen similar triangles and differs from them only by being on a much bigger scale.

It is necessary, however, to point out that the Soviet press, as is evident from the cable extracts in the very same *l'Humanité*, makes very circumspect use of the latest amalgam in relation to Trotsky and does not go beyond inferences concerning "the ideological inspirers". In return, however, *l'Humanité* broadcasts my participation in the murder of Kirov with almost the same assurance with which the *Matin* recently wrote concerning my participation in the assassination of King Alexander and Barthou.

The difference in the conclusions drawn by *l'Humanité* and *Pravda* is to be explained not only by the fact that the idiocy of the Nicolaiev-"consul"-Trotsky amalgam is much more obvious in Moscow than in Paris—but also because, by its very essence, this part of the amalgam is destined for foreign consumption, primarily for France. Its direct aim is to exert an influence of the necessary kind on the French workers through the medium of the united front, and to exert pressure upon the French authorities. Hence, the un-

believable tone of *l'Humanité*! The Soviet authorities were compelled to admit openly that the participation of Zinoviev, Kamenev and others "was not proved": The official dispatches generally made no mention of me at all. The indictment refers only to the anxiety of the "consul" to obtain a letter to Trotsky—without drawing any conclusions. The lackeys of *l'Humanité* write that Trotsky's participation in the murder of Kirov was "proved".

This article, as I have already said, is addressed not to the lackeys but to their masters. However, I cannot leave unmentioned here the fact that one of my first sharp conflicts with the "troika" (Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev), came as a result of my protest against their busy efforts during the time of Lenin's illness, to corrupt the more pliant "leaders" of the labor movement in the West, particularly by means of bribes. Stalin and Zinoviev replied in rebuttal, "Doesn't the bourgeoisie buy the leaders of trade unions, members of parliament, and journalists—why shouldn't we do likewise?" My answer was that by means of bribes one could disintegrate the workers' movement, but not create revolutionary leaders. Lenin used to warn against selecting "docile imbeciles" for the Comintern. But the selection has been extended to include cynics who are ready for anything. Ready for anything? Up to the first serious danger. People who have neither honor nor conscience cannot be trustworthy revolutionists. In the moment of difficulty they will inevitably betray the proletariat. My only counsel to workers is that they remember well the names of these shameless vili-fiers, in order that they may verify this forecast.

LEON TROTSKY

December 30, 1934