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200: Imp. of power became Key  
became instead of freedom.

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The self-lessness of the  
Capitulation! See Lawrence.

The question of being right: every body agreed  
that he should go to jail if he was wrong.

# THE RUSSIAN ENIGMA

*By*  
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leaders of that revolution—still equals in right—appeared on the same platform, face to face with the world.

The forced speeches of Bukharin and Zinoviev failed to impress me in the least ; Bukharin appeared to me pretentious, Zinoviev verbose. Stalin's unshakable determination to push matters to the extreme, the clarity with which he stated the dilemma, impressed me deeply, in spite of the heaviness of his speech. Trotsky spoke in an exceptionally intelligent and subtle way. From the point of view of oratory, his speech marked the culminating peak of the session. This triumph was all the more remarkable, as public recognition was denied him on account of political calculations.

Trotsky walked up to the platform ; a deep silence fell over the meeting. He asked leave to speak for two hours. The Chairman, a Bulgarian named Kolarov, refused to grant him more than the half-hour accorded to all the speakers whose names were down. Trotsky seemed about to descend from the platform when, after a few moments' hesitation, the Chairman offered him one hour. Trotsky remained and began his speech—his swan-song.

The hall listened breathlessly. Those among the audience who had no clear-cut mandate could not resist showing their enthusiasm at the wittier passages of the speech. Trotsky stigmatized the agents of the Comintern : Manuilsky, Pepper and Schmeral. From the Committee's bench, dear old Clara Zetkin leaned over the balustrade in order not to lose one word. Bukharin, moved and tense, was taking notes for his reply to Trotsky. Pepper, feeling himself beaten, sought help from Zetkin, but she stopped him with a sharp word ; he hastened over to Bukharin ; the latter, without saying anything, pointed to his ear to indicate that he wished to listen and pushed him aside.

However, notwithstanding the polemic brilliance of his oratory, Trotsky wrapped his exposition of the debate in too great a prudence and diplomacy. The audience was unable to appreciate its depth, the tragedy of the divergences separating the Opposition from the majority.

Kamenev's speech was sober and clear. In contrast with Zinoviev and Trotsky, he did not begin by refuting the accusations brought against the Opposition. He began his speech by affirming that there existed in Russia and in the Third International a danger from the Right, represented by

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subsidiary to the sacrosanct principle of hierarchy. To be able to say, "I spoke to Yagoda today", or "Trilisser called out to me", was an event in the life of an official two or three rungs lower down the hierarchic ladder.

Their habits were remarkably bourgeois. One met important officials, powdered and perfumed like *demi-mondaines*. The men of the G.P.U. kissed the hands of their womenfolk. But what struck me most was their feeling of caste. They all considered one another as members of the same family, as the saviours of the revolution. They accepted their immense privileges with serene complacency as feeble rewards for their activities. It is true that they devoted the best of their years and energy to the service; they carried out a stupendous task which to them had become one with their careers and privileges. In the struggles inside the Party, the collaborators of the G.P.U. were almost without exception fanatic adversaries of the Right and adherents of Stalin. The various services of the G.P.U. were at that time the bulwarks of the Stalinist section. When Rykov's secretary, an official of the G.P.U., went over to the Right, it was referred to in those circles as a real calamity. "Just imagine, Ferdinand has had himself influenced by Rykov," they exclaimed in despair. It was considered a dishonour to the institution as a whole.

I also came across a number of Trotsky's sympathizers in the G.P.U. The possibility of a Stalin-Trotsky coalition was considered with great enthusiasm by some. There were even a few real Trotskyists. I remember a discussion between two brothers, the one employed by the Central Committee, an adherent of Stalin, the other an important official of the G.P.U. and a Trotskyist. I rarely encountered so much hatred and loathing of Stalin as I did when meeting this last.

Later, when I found myself in the bad books of the G.P.U. and knew its prisons and exile, I was able to observe that institution from the bottom instead of observing it from the top. But let us not anticipate.

In the autumn of 1928, the struggle inside the Party was entering its decisive stage. The problem of the deliveries of wheat once more came to the fore. Members of the Central Committee were feverishly canvassed with a view to the plenum. Stalin had met with a set-back in attempting to win the Leningrad people over to his cause—Komarov and

The representative of the Politbureau of the Yugo-Slav Party wanted to prove that lackeys are always more zealous than their masters. He demanded nothing more nor less than our expulsion. The decision made by Soltz's Commission was more lenient : three (of whom I was one) were to be suspended from the Party for a period of one year ; twenty comrades were ordered to leave Moscow for any other place of residence of their choice, in order to ' permit the struggle within the Yugo-Slav Party to calm down ' ; a few dozen comrades came off with a mere reprimand.

These reprisals revealed to us certain new aspects of Party tactics in Russia. What was most noticeable was the slowness of action. It was due to the fact that the Party was passing through a period of transition and also to the particular methods used in dealing with newcomers to the Opposition.

At the time an open conflict was being waged in both Party and Comintern against the section of the Right. The notes of Trotsky about the Kamenev-Bukharin parleys, published in February, had had the effect of turning the majority of the Politbureau and of the Presidium of the Comintern against the ' triumvirate ' of the Right. Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky heard themselves openly accused of being the leaders of the Right. This accusation was sanctioned at the XVIth Party Congress in April, 1929. Bukharin was removed from his post of chief editor of *Pravda*, and Tomsky from the leadership of the syndicates. At the same time, in the field of the Comintern, Bukharin partisans were removed from the various sections.

As to the Opposition of the Left, Stalin was making a great effort to win over the Trotskyists without Trotsky. The latter's exile was his pretext. I first thought that the attempt would fail, that once Trotsky was banished, his adherents would tighten their ranks. I made a mistake there. The entire ' old Trotskyist generation ' was ready to sacrifice the person of their leader, to discard the principle of workers' democracy, to shut their eyes to the conditions of the workers, so long as the struggle against the kulaks and the industrialization of the country were kept up. Preobajensky, the most disinterested of the ' capitulators ', and one of the foremost ideologists of the Communist bureaucracy, made this programme the *sine qua non* of all agreement

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with Stalin. When he reminded Stalin of the waverings of the Central Committee, the latter firmly replied, "If necessary, I shall have the entire Central Committee arrested, but I shall carry out the Five Year Plan." That brought the parleys to a close.

When we had gone to the Comintern in answer to the convocation sent us by the Soltz Commission, we had found the Preobajensky-Radek group there, gaining its footing in the Party. In these circumstances, the Stalinist administration had good reasons to cause our affair to drag; there were hopes that we would follow the Russian Opposition on its road to capitulation, and that, abandoning our 'romantic' conception of socialism, we would finish by returning to the good road of bureaucratic truth.

It was not merely a matter of giving us time to think. They still wanted to conquer us, convince us. I was to undergo the enquiries of a Special Commission on the eve of my exclusion from the Party; yet it was then that I saw open before me the possibilities of political work at the Comintern which had before been refused me when I was still an irreproachable Party-member and an official delegate of the Yugo-Slav Central Committee. The task was given me of writing the history of the Yugo-Slav Party, and I was allowed to penetrate into the 'Holy of Holies', the archives of the Comintern. It was not just chance. I was able to see later that a regular system was being applied.

Bureaucratic tactics consisted in terrorizing the opponent from outside, whilst demoralizing him from the inside by a labour of corruption. The process was known by the beautiful name of 'Communist re-education'. One began by warning the culprit and gently pushing him aside; he was given to understand that his attitude did not correspond with the exigencies of the moment, that he ought to 'amend', to 'Bolshevize' himself. If this warning had no effect, he was threatened with severe administrative measures; if he remained obdurate, he would be courted and before he could regain his composure he would be entrusted with an interesting, well-remunerated task, and he was practically told, "You see, the dictatorship of the proletariat is severe but not resentful; the Party has its principles but it is not petty. It would be easy for us to crush you: you are an isolated individual, everyone condemns you; yet we are offering you

share the Olympian serenity of the Russian Communists who thought that everything was above-board so long as they had assured their divorced wives a livelihood.

This feeling of disapproval was strengthened when one made the acquaintance of the new wives of these Communists. But for rare exceptions, they were by no means serious-minded women. They were usually drawn from the petit-bourgeois, the 'intelligentsia', and civil servants' families. Often they belonged to the old ruling classes. Even in the case of those who had been working women, students and Communists, one felt no spiritual union between them and their husbands. It was all too clear that marriage to them had been only a means of advancement in the world, of having nice living-quarters, dresses and a car. Those who had belonged to 'good families' before the revolution had moreover an assurance of security for themselves and their relatives.

One cannot compel one's feelings. But is it not curious to see that Russian Communists have feelings only for that sort of woman? It is very reminiscent of what takes place in bourgeois society, where pretty girls marry rich old men. Socialists have always denounced this form of prostitution called marriage. And the analogy goes further. One day I had occasion to read a letter of the young wife of a very prominent People's Commissar to her lover, a student. It reminded me of the old cabinet ministers of Europe and the cheerful lovers kept by their wives. Nature, even in Soviet Russia, has her own back.

These men did not always seek a divorce. They often just took mistresses. A new class of Soviet-spirited courtesans had arisen. But the difference between these Soviet morals and those of the higher classes of capitalist society was difficult to appreciate.

These morals roused the indignation of the young people. On the occasion of a commemorative banquet organized by a Soviet institution—a banquet which as a matter of fact degenerated into a Homeric drinking-bout—the members of the Comsomol (Communist Youth League) of that institution noticed that one of the guests, the famous Budienny, was too tenderly kissing the hands of a young and frail girl-student of the Conservatory. They were told that she was his new wife. Later on they learnt that the former wife of Budienny, who had been in the Red Army and had fought through the Civil

War at his side, was now safely in a lunatic asylum. The Party Cell had to use a very heavy hand to stifle the scandal that these young people were about to expose.

Another example: a group of young members of the Comsomol lodged a complaint against a colleague who had been allocated to them, when they learned that he lived with his housekeeper whilst refusing to marry her. In that case, too, the administration hushed up the whole affair by remonstrating with them and dropping more than a few hints about reprisals.

I wanted to have direct knowledge of the opinion of the interested parties and formed friendships with young Communists. They were decent young people, of working class origin, themselves workers. They had already acquired a certain instruction and had reached a certain status, but they were preparing themselves for further advancement, several of them by means of University examinations. They worked with great ardour and modesty. I noticed not one trace of the depravity which, according to the foreign press, prevailed in the Comsomol. Later, when in prison, I learned from Opposition-Communists that, indeed, at one time, there had been a certain moral corruption in the Comsomol, but only in the days of the NEP and at certain stages of the hierarchy.

Yet these admirable youths drew their lessons from the private and public examples of morality shown them by the senior Communists. They refused to neglect the vast possibilities for study and work that Communist society offered them; they would sooner have given up their moral ideals. I discreetly tested the possibilities of drawing them into the Opposition, but I soon found that they would have been incapable of engaging in a systematic and fierce struggle against the bureaucratic régime. One might have won them over in a moment of indignation, but they would have drawn back as soon as they had understood the serious consequences that Opposition activity might entail. For that reason I did not persist.

When corrupt morals prevail in the upper layer of society, one can expect to find the same in the street among the poor. In the centre of the town, in Neglinna Street, a few steps away from the State Bank, groups of prostitutes could be seen walking up and down the pavement. A little farther, in Petrovka Street and Tverskaya Street, more elegant prostitutes had

their beat. In Moscow were to be found the worst vices of the big towns of Europe and the East. In the heart of the capital, in a café specializing in such things, ladies in quest of adventure could find men whose bodies were for sale. Near Nikitskaya Gate was the secret market of the homosexuals. Houses of assignation, the 'apartments of Zoika', were tolerated and flourishing. There were places where bohemians mixed with the relics of the old society and the new Communist aristocracy. Circles of Lesbians had a certain success in Moscow as well as in the provinces. Often eroticism was tinged with mysticism.

To these 'normal' phenomena of the capitalist world was added a phenomenon peculiar to Moscow. There was a whole group of women married to Communist dignitaries who gave themselves up to prostitution to round off their budgets and to obtain extra dresses. At the time of which I write, notwithstanding all the privileges in kind they enjoyed, such as apartments, paid holidays and so on, officials drew but relatively modest salaries; there was a legal maximum for Party-members. This salary was insufficient to allow for luxurious clothes, and on the whole there was still a feeling that Communists should dress modestly. People had not yet reached the stage where arguments were provided advocating the 'civilized life'. Soon the G.P.U., always vigilant, learned, to its profound horror, that the wives of honourable Communist officials were prostituting themselves in secret. After it had recovered from its first astonishment, the G.P.U. decided to exploit this knowledge to the greater glory of the revolution. It shut its eyes to the private lives of these ladies, but forced them to co-operate with it. They had to watch and denounce their husbands and their friends. The G.P.U. was accustomed to avail itself on a variety of pretexts of the services of the wives of prominent Communists or of non-Party technicians.

These moral sores were not merely a heritage of the past. On the contrary, they seemed to rise and flourish in new fields of Soviet society. That was what worried me most. When the theatre unveiled these vices, it seemed to me that the criticism of past corruption was too attractive to the new *élite*, that it found a much greater satisfaction in the rendering of these vices on the stage than in their condemnation. Thus only can I explain to myself the insistence with which a

actions were irreconcilable, according to the old theory put forward by Trotsky. Yet the proletariat remained under the heel of bureaucracy. I saw no signs of its future emancipation. Could one conclude that Stalin would end by breaking his neck and be replaced by men from the Right? In the absence of Rykov and Bukharin—the Dantons of the Russian revolution, who had already been morally executed on the guillotine—their more fortunate heirs would succeed to Stalin. That was the direction events seemed to be following.

Then came the first months of 1930. Collectivization to the fullest extent was proclaiming its triumph. But at the same time more and more echoes were heard of peasant resistance and peasant risings.

Collectivizations and risings had all Russia in their grip. Trotskyists, Zinovievists, Right-wing Communists and Stalinists were all talking with equal anxiety of the storm that was brewing and of which no one could foretell the issue. I gathered from a conversation I had with a trusty Stalinist, a collaborator of the Central Committee, that the Moscow leaders had been particularly impressed by the peasant bands that had formed in the province of Ryazan, within reach of the capital.

From several quarters came tales of Voroshilov's resistance to Stalinist collectivization: "You reduce the country to despair and it is left to me to cope with the situation. I am not doing it." And Voroshilov refused the support of the Red Army to crush the peasant revolts. From that day special divisions of the G.P.U. conducted the punitive expeditions.

The hurricane was sweeping Russia, smashing the time-old patriarchal system of the country to atoms. Bureaucracy was imposing its own civilization. The bloody progress fought its way through towns and villages, sword in hand and starvation at its heels.

Suddenly, on the second day of March the trumpets of retreat were sounded. Stalin published his article, *The Vertigo of Success*. The forced enrolment of the peasants into *kolkhosi* (collective farms), the basis of Stalin's agrarian policy, was proclaimed to be but a deformation of the general Line by the local authorities. The general Line, it was said, demanded that collectivization should be entirely voluntary.

The effect produced by this declaration was immense. The number of collective farms fell with lightning rapidity; it dwindled from day to day, from province to province. What a speculation on the Stock Exchange of History!

The peasants marched in procession through the villages, carrying Stalin's portrait as if it were an ikon. They were to pay dearly for this confidence. Copies of the paper with Stalin's article, priced at five kopeks, were sold at ten roubles in the country. Everyone wished to possess this historic document. Markets in town and village were opened again. On the lower rungs of the administration there was a momentary confusion and bewilderment. "I am off to reinstate the kulaks in the villages," an instructor of the regional Committee of Leningrad told me, half-jokingly. He had been given the task of righting the 'local deformations'; two weeks previously he had been 'dekulaking' the countryside.

Thermidor has come, I thought, we are drawing near to the dénouement. At this moment, the retreat was being carried out in good order, but at any moment a general rout could be expected. Every morning, on waking up, I wondered whether there had been a *coup d'état* at the Kremlin.

Soon 'administrative lessons' were drawn from the events. The secretary of the Moscow Party Committee, Baumann, who had, eighteen months before, replaced Uglanov, a Right-wing man, in that capacity, was now declared guilty of 'deviation to the Left' and appointed to the secretaryship of the Central Party Committee in Central Asia, which corresponded to a sort of exile. Baumann was expiating the Ryazan rising and the closing of the markets at Moscow.

The fate of local 'deviators' was far worse, especially in the distant provinces, where violence had been particularly odious and the risings all the more forceful. The district leaders of the Party Soviets or G.P.U. were now being executed, and, though the number of these executions was not very considerable, they caused terrible panic. What struck me most on hearing eye-witness accounts of these events was that the people condemned should have accepted their expiatory sacrifice with such relative calm. They thought that, if these executions saved the bureaucratic dictatorship as a whole, if they calmed the rebellious peasantry

(or rather if they misled them into error), the sacrifice of their lives would not have been in vain. This attitude was particularly prevalent among members of the Cheka. What an astonishing manifestation of caste-feeling! Among the victims thrown by Stalin to the fury of the people, a few were saved by the last-minute intervention of their friends; the rest were executed.

This original method of calming the anger of the people reminded me of Marco Polo's report of the Mongol Emperor who reigned in Peking at that time. It was customary once every ten or fifteen years to deliver over to the crowd the minister most abhorred by it, which allowed the Emperor quietly to oppress his people for the next ten or fifteen years. What I saw in Russia was to bring this Mongol Emperor repeatedly to my mind.

The retreat of the bureaucracy lasted throughout the month of March, 1930; it was an organized retreat, not a rout. The flood of the peasant revolt did not succeed in swamping the system, but on the contrary returned slowly to its accustomed channels. In April all doubts were removed: the retreat of March had been a tactical move, not a capitulation. The collapse of the *kolkhosi* was stemmed, and in a few places their development even resumed an upward trend. After a few fluctuations, the percentage of collectivized land came to rest round about the figure 25, instead of the 50 per cent of February. At the same time, the rhythm of collectivization had slowed down, its methods having become 'democratized' and the despoiling of the peasants in the *kolkhosi* having diminished. The programme originally set out for one or two years was now spread over three or four. Whereas originally everything was to be collectivized down to the last fowl, it was now decided that the peasant was to hand over "only" essential produce to the collective: his land, his ploughing cattle, agricultural implements and barns. He was to keep his house and what he needed for his own domestic purposes.

Yet the kulaks were deprived of literally everything, which meant to say that 5 to 10 per cent of all peasants suffered. Their confiscated property was given to the common fund of the *kolkhosi*: the kulaks and their entire families were packed off to Siberia, to concentration camps and to exile. The same fate was reserved for anyone who made the

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several years at the front during the Civil War. The fear and the bewilderment that now held him in their grip seemed to reflect the sentiments of the deepest strata of the proletariat. "We have taken the wrong turning," was the conclusion they drew from the revolution. Towards the end of the Five Year Plan, at the time of the 'better life' proclaimed by the bureaucracy, these strata of the population were fully aware of the real nature of the present system of the U.S.S.R.

I heard similar reflections from the mouth of a foreign Communist worker employed in the textile industry. Of Southern origin, he expressed his feelings with greater passion. "Never in my life have I known such slavery as there is in my factory. If such a thing existed in a bourgeois country, I would have thrown a bomb at it a long time ago!" But in Russia he did nothing of the sort, for he saw no way out: the mass of the workers was passive, and authority, was it not 'our authority'? In despair he was trying to get back to his own country; there at least he would know against whom and how to fight. He obtained his permit to leave only with the greatest difficulty, for his 'lack of enthusiasm for the Soviet system' was well known. Nowadays, although he has lost his faith, he continues to work in the official Communist Party. At any rate, no one could think out a better system, he told me after my return to Europe.

I also remember a conversation with a manual worker who had done some repairs to my room. Having gone to his home to pay him, I found him absorbed in reading a newspaper. I scarcely knew him and asked him, "What do the papers say?" He pointed to the tidings concerning the limitation of social legislation in Germany which the Soviet Press had transformed into an abolition of social insurances. "Just like it is in this country," the workman said without further comment. That simplicity and that sincerity told more than a long discourse on the feelings that Soviet bureaucracy inspired in the workers. My humble workman seemed to imply the discouraged view that it was not he alone who thought so, but everyone.

At that time it was officially announced that unemployment was 'liquidated' in Soviet Russia. The result of that announcement was that all unemployment benefits were equally 'liquidated'. Moreover, a number of regulations protecting the workers had been curtailed. Newspapers, on

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milieu, all these families had something in common and belonged to the same social and psychological type. They formed an aristocracy of the 'new rich'. I knew, of course, that they belonged to the new privileged class, but what was new to me was that they were fully conscious of it and were permeated with the spirit of hierarchy and caste. That was an important detail which forced itself upon me from the beginning.

Most of these families were of working class or artisan origin. Their members, sprung from the people, retained, in their speech, manners and facial expressions, the imprint of their past, yet how cold and haughty was their attitude towards the workers.

They had consideration for none but those who occupied a dominant place in society. He who 'with us, in Soviet Russia,' had not succeeded in rising was an inferior being, a worthless man. A man's worth was measured by the elegance of the holidays he could afford, by his apartment, his furniture, his clothes and the position he occupied in the administrative hierarchy. The new privileged class was subdivided into strata that were invisible to the outsider, but that were carefully distinguished. It was not merely strict hierarchy. People belonging to the same hierarchic stratum were still differentiated in accordance with all sorts of criteria: their seniority, the way in which they had formed their career, their social and political biography. The solidarity that linked the members of each stratum was directed only towards the lower strata; within the privileged class, the groups waged an insidious and malevolent strife. It reminded me of the heinous struggle described by Dreiser in his *Financier*, a struggle opposing the various groups of the upper bourgeoisie in accordance with their degree of wealth and the way in which that wealth had been acquired. Is it not astonishing that when the best writers of Europe and America, cognizant of the finest shades of hierarchic difference within bourgeois society, come to Russia, they fail to notice that these same social differences are bringing about a changed Soviet Russia?

The differentiation of the bureaucratic *élite* was made on yet another plane: the husbands, the wives and the children constituted three groups, each with its own standards. The husbands had a developed sense of diplomacy, they were

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were filled with guilty managers. Some of them were Communists and vigorously defended the Government policy. After two weeks the managers were liberated and it was stated that the irregularities in the matter of the distribution of bread ration cards had been due to oversights. They were the only group of prisoners that got off so lightly.

### THE 'ACADEMICIANS'

In my prison there was a group of professors, lecturers and academicians of Leningrad, the most notable among them being Professor Tarle and the academician Platonov. They had committed the crime of having failed to adapt themselves to the system and of having shown scepticism as regards the Five Year Plan. In prison slang they were always called 'academicians'. They enjoyed the privilege of special food; alone among the non-political prisoners they were entitled to the food reserved for political prisoners.

There were two representatives of this group in my ward: Belayev, the director of the Pushkin House, and S—, lecturer in international law at the University.

Belayev was a Russian intellectual of the old school, cultured but narrowly academic. He was interested in Pushkin, in the history of literature and in the lives of the literary *élite*. The form of government, be it Czarist or Soviet, was totally indifferent to him. Planing over the peaks of learning, he looked down from a considerable height on the things of this life, and the people to him were but a negligible crowd. Even in prison he lived in his ivory tower, re-reading Sophocles, Cervantes, Thackeray and Dumas and speaking rarely to the proletarians in our ward.

Before his arrest he had been abroad several times for matters connected with his work. Had he wished, he need not have come back. The reason for his return was that he cared more for Pushkin House than for all the rest of the world put together. I particularly remember a talk I had with him about Gorky. Belayev told me that Gorky was not the naïve enthusiast that people generally liked to think him. Gorky was a clever *mujik* who did not overlook his own interests. But it had to be admitted that he was deeply and sincerely devoted to culture. His claim on the gratitude of the generations to come was that he had made use of his intimacy with Lenin and the other leading Bolsheviks to

philosophy'. He had been made to work in the central offices of the camp. To the horrors of Solovetsk had been added a figment of delirium: in the midst of a typhoid epidemic, the prison theatre was filled with camp-beds on which the sufferers lay moaning, but on the stage, surrounded by the dying, those convicts who had been promoted to the role of actors were with great fervour rehearsing a play celebrating the success of the Five Year Plan and of Socialist Enthusiasm.

One day I stayed behind in the ward in order to read whilst the other prisoners went for their exercise. One of my neighbours who had also stayed behind drew near and sat down beside me. He had long ago attracted my attention. With visible interest he had listened to my violent but sincere criticisms of the prevailing system, but he had never spoken. His silence seemed due to fear of the G.P.U., though for all one knew he might have been a G.P.U. man himself, for there were always some in the wards disguised as prisoners. One had just been unmasked in Deditch's ward. At first, therefore, I showed great reserve. After having been silent for some time, my neighbour whispered to me, "Don't talk so violently against the Government; last night, when you went out to get some boiling water, the head of the ward said that you ought to be shot. People like you might have a bad influence in these days. The head of the ward is a man of the Cheka, and he does not express merely his personal opinion. You must be careful with them."

My position in the ward was, indeed, somewhat peculiar. I was the only prisoner openly to criticize and declare himself against the present system. The others told what they had seen or suffered, and sometimes told of their interrogations before the magistrate, or of things that had incriminated them. But of the four or five hundred men I met in that prison, not one—with the possible exception of Kozlov (who was shot)—made himself out to be an enemy of the Government nor offered any projects of a possible struggle against the authorities. Even those who had been condemned to death were silent; men taken out to be shot left the ward without a word, without a cry of revolt against the Government that put them to death. If such was the attitude of people in prison, what was there to be said of those who lived in liberty? Those as a rule did not even venture to whisper about what they had suffered personally.

## THE OUTCASTS

were discussed without the least restraint and without any fear whatsoever. The invigilating inspector would sit down somewhere or walk to and fro. He no doubt made his reports in the proper quarters, but nobody seemed to be in the least concerned with that. At these meetings Stalin came off very badly, being called all sorts of names. I had seen many things in the U.S.S.R. but none so bewildering as this isle of liberty, lost in an ocean of slavery—or was it merely a madhouse? So great was the contrast between the humiliated, terrified country and the freedom of mind that reigned in this prison that one was first inclined toward the madhouse theory. How was one to admit that in the immensity of silence-stricken Russia the two or three small islands of liberty where men still had the right to think and speak freely were . . . the prisons?

After having made a summary acquaintance with the political life of the isolator, I first wanted to familiarize myself with its penitentiary system, which I will now proceed to explain.

Our prison consisted of a vast rectangular, three-storied building. Destined to be used as an officers' prison, it had been put into service as such on the eve of the War. Its main axis pointed north to south. Most of the prisoners lodged in the north wing, which was the coldest. The administration occupied most of the south wing. As to the living-quarters of the members of the administration, they formed a separate building. The prison was surrounded by a wall fifteen feet high, with occasional turrets for armed guards. The space between wall and prison was divided by transversal walls of the same height into five courtyards in which the prisoners took their exercise. The baths were also placed between the ring wall and the prison. The kitchens, the cells for prisoners in civil law who were made to perform the prison work, the food and clothes stores were all in the basement.

The prison counted sixty wards, that is to say, twenty on each floor. Ten of them had wooden floors, the others were floored with cement. There was central heating, but it failed almost entirely to heat the ground floor. As we were housed in the north wing of the ground floor, we could easily ascertain the truth of this. Throughout the winter we had to wear lined jackets and felt boots. The cold in the ward was such

was suppressed by violence. Stalin had showed himself less liberal than Napoleon III. But it was not due only to Stalin. Little by little, I learned that in the days of Lenin and Trotsky, the repression of socialists and anarchists had grown in severity in the same ratio as the country became pacified, and that, during the worst dangers of Civil War, the system had been much more kindly. It was from 1921 onwards, when the Civil War had come to an end and the NEP was launched, that the revolution, finally triumphant, had instituted the system of unlimited persecution. What is the logic of this inverted logic?

The terms 'political repression', 'political' prisoners or exiles are, in the U.S.S.R., applied only to socialists, anarchists and Opposition Communists. They alone are entitled to the special treatment of political prisoners. But they are but an infinitesimal minority, a few thousands, a few tens of thousands at most, compared with the millions of prisoners and exiles all condemned for some political reason, though the authorities do not consider it as such. These millions are treated like criminals in civil law and are sent to do forced labour. If there is any attenuation of these rigours, it is applied only to intellectuals whose mission it is to direct the servile manual labour.

These prisoners can be divided into six fundamental categories: former aristocrats, people condemned for sabotage, peasants, 'religious' people, members of national Oppositions whether they be democrats or Communists, and finally, manual labourers.

The first category comprises the members of ancient families belonging to the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, the merchant class, ex-officers, ex-police inspectors, etc. During the Five Year Plan, a hundred thousand, or two hundred thousand, perhaps even more, were imprisoned. In any case, the figure I mention is the minimum.

The few tens of thousands of people condemned for sabotage were non-Party intellectuals.

The integral collectivization and 'dekulakization' had resulted on the one hand in three hundred thousand *kolkhosi*, on the other in several million exiled peasant families. In our prison it was estimated that the number of exiled peasants was to be found somewhere between five and ten million. The real kulaks hardly constituted one-fifth of that number,

Ukht-Petchersk, those condemned on account of sabotage—engineers, doctors, economists and agricultural experts—lived in comfortable villas, side by side with the Communist authorities, and enjoyed a sufficient diet, though unvaried. The workers, miners and bricklayers, former peasants and prisoners in civil law, lived like cattle in huts with earth floors and did not receive enough to eat. They were overburdened with work and died off like flies from scurvy and other ailments.

Here is another example. In accordance with the 'last word in American technique' a splendid car-road was being constructed across the terrible *taiga* or virgin forest, from the Bay of Nogaiev on the Pacific Ocean to the River Kolyma that runs into the Arctic Ocean. At the same time, the flow of the river was controlled and was being made navigable to ensure the connection between the two oceans. Engineers condemned on account of sabotage, supervised by the G.P.U., directed the work, which was carried out by deported peasants and by a number of free labourers. The engineers received high salaries; thus in 1935, the chief engineer was paid three thousand roubles per month. The condemned engineers lived with the G.P.U. chiefs and Party leaders and formed with them an *élite* in the middle of this Arctic desert. This *élite* did not mix with the 'middle' layers consisting of small officials and other convicts; as to the humble workers of peasant stock, whether free or prisoner, they had no contact with their superiors.

After Kirov's murder, a group of former aristocrats was sent into exile to join this miniature world, and among them a few former princesses of the highest rank. They were all immediately received into the *élite*; posts were found for them, as secretaries and typists; they were invited to soirées and pleasure parties. Soon the famous singer, Utesov, arrived from Leningrad, condemned for reasons of an entirely private nature; he soon organized a theatre with the assistance of the former aristocrats. This theatre absorbed the money laid aside for the 'cultural needs' of the colony. Who were entitled to culture if not the authorities? After five or six months most of the former aristocratic ladies had—for the third or even fifth time, maybe—been married to *saboteurs* or to G.P.U. or Party officials. One more year would entitle them to their liberty. After my liberation from Verkhne-Uralsk, I had occasion to meet one of those ladies.

She described to me, not without pleasure, the agreeable life led by the good company in that forgotten corner of the extreme North. But when I questioned her about the life of the peasants who worked there, she could tell me nothing, for she had never had to mix with them.

I did learn what interested me from the mouths of workers who had laboured from 1932 to 1934 upon the river Kolyma. One of them had been employed, with six hundred other exiled peasants, upon constructing a bridge across the middle reaches of the river. After two winters, only twenty peasants remained alive; the others had died of cold, hunger and scurvy. There was nothing unusual in that; in another sector, in the interior, nearly all the exiles had died, one winter, as the G.P.U. had been unable to provide the necessary food. That is what one refers to when saying, "The Five Year Plan is carried out under great difficulties." As to the free workers who had enrolled for the work of their own free will, they were systematically robbed of their wages, and their complaints remained without effect. It was because the administration was making profits out of the labour of these men!

As for the former aristocrats: it is plain that if, even in captivity, they found it possible to link up with the *élite* of Communist leaders and technicians, those in freedom must have had all the more opportunity of doing so. After what I have seen in the U.S.S.R., I can affirm that if one-third of the ruling class of ancient Russia has perished or has emigrated, two-thirds of it have amalgamated with the new dominating class born from the revolution.

But to return to our subject. The two other categories of prisoners to whom the appellation of 'political' is denied are the 'religious' people and the Nationalistic Oppositions. The 'religious' people comprised priests, active members of religious communities and sectarians of every kind. There were a hundred thousand of them imprisoned during the Five Year Plan, for they were often deported on pretexts that had nothing to do with religion.

One must not forget that today there exist three organized social forces in Russia. (1) The Communist bureaucracy that governs the State, the military machine and the so-called workers' organizations. (2) The ITR or technical personnel, that is, autonomous syndical sections in which are found

Declared counter-revolutionaries and monarchists—very few, on the whole—did not enjoy the privileges accorded to political prisoners. Those among them who had shown themselves at all active were mercilessly executed, and their 'sympathizers' were shot on all sorts of pretexts. From 1928 to 1934, at a low estimate, a million men at least were sent to concentration camps and into exile, accused of speculation, unlawful commerce, etc. They were mainly artisans, small traders, members of the petit-bourgeoisie, in short. But among them were also manual labourers, peasants, office-workers, particularly office-workers from co-operatives and State commercial enterprises.

In our prison at Verkhne-Uralsk, we repeatedly tried to calculate the number of people arbitrarily dealt with by the G.P.U. Our estimates could only be very approximate. Towards the end of 1932, a recently arrived Trotskyist told us that, according to a statement made by an important G.P.U. official, condemned for reasons of professional errors, the number of arrests made in the course of the last five years amounted to 37,000,000 people. Even allowing for the majority to have been arrested a number of times running, the figure struck us as a hopeless exaggeration. Our own estimates varied from five to fifteen million. I must add that, when I was set free and was in Siberia, I was able to check the correctness of many an assertion that had seemed a fantastic exaggeration to me when I was still in prison. Thus I was able to verify the accuracy of the reports concerning the horrors of the 1932 famine, inclusive of the tales of cannibalism. After what I was able to see in Siberia, I consider that the figure of five million arrests is far too low and that ten million would be much nearer to the truth.

Westerners, used to relatively small and densely populated territories, with stable economic structures, will find it hard to admit that so large a mass of humanity could have been so rapidly deported. Russia's immense spaces do not seem a sufficient answer. It is by observing, with one's own eyes, the tumultuous ocean that was Russia during the Five Year Plan that one arrives at the belief that these migrations were not only possible, but even in harmony with the actual events. The gigantic achievements of the Five Year Plan were the outcome of servile labour. The situation of the theoretically free workers did not differ essentially from that

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of those workers who were not. The only difference was in the degree of enslavement.

Throughout the country millions of exiles were at work, but above all in the distant Northern regions, colonized for the first time; there the hardest privations were borne such as would never have been freely accepted. Not only were the people exploited, but they were exploited in the most absolute fashion, regardless of the 'human capital' they represented. From 1929 to 1934, the average lifetime of the Northern exiles did not exceed one or two years. But if the exiles died, the work of their hands remained.

Imagine a territory of six or seven thousand miles long by three hundred to fifteen hundred miles wide, from Solovetsk and the White Sea Canal to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, to the Kamchatka peninsula and Vladivostok. This territory, as well as the whole of Central Asia, was strewn at all crossroads with concentration camps and 'labour colonies' (the latter being the name given to camps with a specific task to fulfil) and centres for compulsory exile. Of every two or three men one met in Siberia, at the office, in factories or in *soukosi* (State farms), one would be an exile.

The colonization of the North is undeniably a task of world importance, but the way in which it has been effected calls to mind the former methods of colonization in America and elsewhere; it is mainly the labour of slave workers. The forest industry of Northern Russia and Siberia employs servile manual labour, and the gold-mines employ it to a large extent. Similarly the coal-mines of Kuznetsk and Karaganda. The Balmach copper industry and the electric-power stations of Central Asia are the work of prisoners in the 'labour colonies'. Even in the Ukraine the factory for agricultural tractors has been built partly by forced labour. In the heart of European Russia, the cutting of the Moscow-Volga canal is done with powerful assistance from hordes of slaves. As to the enormous military and economic development of the Far East, with its railways, motor-roads and lines of fortifications along the Manchurian border, it is the work of an immense and constantly renewed army of convicts. I think it is no exaggeration to state that a third of the working class in Russia is composed of slaves. This servile labour, barely remunerated as it is, makes easier the task of keeping the wages of the theoretically free at a very low level.

## THE FIRST TERRORIST TRIALS

The murder of the generals meant that the military dictatorship was ripening in Russia. But whether it was already mature, whether it had reached the concrete form of a plot, it would be difficult to say. It would be more prudent to say that the trial of the generals, as all the Soviet trials between 1929 and 1937, had a preventive character. What might happen was to be prevented. The accused were guilty of potential crimes. The accusations were put in the most convenient forms each time, and contained what Stalin deemed useful as charges against his enemies.

Such, it seems to me, were the shares of truth and lie in the famous Moscow trials and in the new Soviet Terrorism.