

THE VILLAINS OF THE TRAGEDY

Contradictions within the working class parties, Lenin maintained, originate from two circumstances: from pressure of the bourgeoisie and from bourgeois ideology and "from the struggle between the new and the old within the workingclass itself." Immediately after the revolution, oppositions, contradictions and even errors were resolved or mastered in the face of the paramount need to consolidate Soviet power against undisguised enemies who "with a mad passion and with a hate intensified to an extreme degree, throw themselves in the fray to get back their lost paradise." (Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*) During this stage no real contra-

dictions arose between the country's need to curtail the freedom of a minority in order to safeguard the new social system and the need to extend the widest possible freedom to the peasants and working people. *For both the suppression and the freedom formed the essence of the revolution.* The people's newly won freedom expressed itself mainly in taking over the land, the means of production and the state apparatus from the minority.

In a recent communication to the *Daily Worker*, Steve Nelson wrote: "Recall the paintings of Lenin sitting in his office with scores of peasants making complaints and criticisms. This was later forgotten under the false claims of security." The claims, however, were not entirely false. The counterrevolutionary plots included plans for murdering leading Communists. Lenin's life was shortened by the bullet of a would-be assassin.

The October Revolution and the policies of that period met with overwhelming popular support. Forced collectivization, however, regarded by many peasants as a confiscation of the newly obtained land, aroused widespread discontent. As a result, socialist transformation of the village could be carried out only by means of repressions.

In the thirties, following the forced collectivization, a new tactic was developed by the enemies of the Soviet power: they ceased to identify themselves openly and came forth as eager party workers and government officials. Socialist construction was harrassed by strange and complex acts of sabotage — explosions, assassinations, breakdowns and perplexing administrative bottlenecks. A real contradiction arose between the need for abolishing restrictions, relaxing the class struggle, and the need for a secret police apparatus for ferretting out the forces responsible for these occurrences.

One of Stalin's main errors consisted of attempting to resolve this contradiction by subordinating the entire state apparatus and the party itself to the Security Department and its all-pervasive secret police. By approaching the need for safeguarding Soviet power onesidedly, Stalin neglected the other and more important aspect of Lenin's teaching: the need for constantly expanding and deepening criticism and self-criticism and inner-party democracy. Expansion of socialist democracy would have helped expose the class enemy inside and outside the party. The task of identifying the enemy would have devolved upon the people and the party as a whole rather than upon a few isolated and secretive officials.

Still can it be claimed that the excesses arose solely out of Stalin's mistaken *theory* that the class struggle must sharpen as socialism advances?

This assumption fails to answer a number of puzzling questions. Why, for example, were the excesses in 1937-38, on the eve of World War II, directed chiefly against "ranking military commanders, cadres who gained invaluable experience in Spain and the Far East?" Why against "the oldest and most loyal party leaders" and not against "the remnants of the defeated exploiting classes" who as later events showed were still far from harmless?*

"We cannot say that these were the needs of a giddy despot," Krushchev stated. "Stalin was convinced that this was necessary for the defense of the interests of the workingclass against the plotting of the enemies and

*The Krushchev report declared: "This terror was actually directed not at the remnants of the defeated exploiting classes but against the honest workers of the party and of the Soviet state; against them were made lying, slanderous and absurd accusations concerning 'two facedness,' 'espionage,' 'sabotage,' preparation of fictitious 'plots 'etc.'"

against the attack of the imperialist camp. He considered that this should be done in the interests of the party . . . in the name of the defense of the revolution's gains. In this lies the whole tragedy."

But the tragedy was not without its villain: a villain who provided the foundation for Stalin's theory of the sharpening of the class struggle as socialism advances. In his report Krushchev speaks of messages streaming into the Kremlin from Sverdlovsk, Leningrad, Vladivostok, "from almost all kraia, oblasts and republics" registering "the existence of blocs of rightists, Trotzkyites, Social Revolutionaries and church leaders . . . forming country-wide terroristic anti-Soviet sabotage, espionage, and uprising centers." These reports were then confirmed by documentary proofs and confessions furnished by the most trusted state organ, the Security Department. And, the Krushchev report adds, "the heads of these so-called uprising staffs were as a rule — for no known reason — first secretaries of oblast or republic Communist Party Central Committees," thousands of tested revolutionaries.

The Krushchev interpolation, "*for no known reason,*" is perplexing. Who but "first secretaries of Central Committees" would an enemy aiming to destroy the party pick as his target? The report admits that "the Security Department was infiltrated with all kinds of provocateurs whose sole activity it was to destroy the party under cover of protecting it . . . all sorts of slanderers were active who sowed distrust among Communists." In his appeal, Rudzutak, an old Bolshevik, referred to the "*presence in the N.K.V.D. of an as yet unliquidated counterrevolutionary center* which is craftily manufacturing cases by forcing innocent people to confess" and "in a way in which there is no opportunity to prove one's non-participation in the

crime." Another old revolutionary, Eikhe, declared in his appeal that the accusations against him were "*the work of real Trotskyites whose arrest he had sanctioned . . . and who subsequently conspired to take revenge on him. . . . I know that I perish because of the vile and mean work of the enemies of the people who fabricated the accusations against me.*" Obviously Stalin's "enemies of the people" were not those Eikhe and Rudzutak pointed to. *But there were enemies.*

It would appear therefore that the thesis expounded in the Krushchev report that by 1935 "the counterrevolutionary groups were long defeated" needs correction.

Was not counterrevolutionary action manifested in the extermination of party members through false accusation?

The conclusion is inescapable that the essential cause of the excesses was the counterrevolutionary conspiracy. Its manifold and devious activities provided the rationale for Stalin's theory about the sharpening of the class struggle as socialism advances. This theory in turn supplemented Stalin's paranoia in facilitating the activities of the counterrevolutionaries, enabling them to wage a campaign of terror against the party and the nation.

"Stalin's unbelievable suspicions," according to Krushchev, "were cleverly taken advantage of by the abject provocateur and vile enemy, Beria." Beria, however, found many collaborators. The opposition whom Beria represented clearly consisted of a highly organized, continuously active political group. The very nature and pattern of its crimes—instigating a break with Yugoslavia, framing and executing leading Communists in the Soviet Union, Hungary, and Bulgaria—were calculated to undermine confidence of the people in socialism.

In view of the thirty-eight year record of attempts of

the Western powers to smash the socialist stronghold or undermine it from within, it is more than probable that these activities were engineered in collusion with foreign accomplices. The full story of these crimes will not be known until the Project X files will be opened in Washington, London, Paris and Bonn (the Gehlert group, a former nazi, anti-Soviet sabotage organization reactivated by Washington and now operating under the Bonn government).

The history of the cold war activities of the West within the socialist world remains to be written. For example, the story of British attempts between 1945 and 1948 to create uprisings in People's Poland by supplying underground bands with money and weapons has not yet been told. The socialist governments have probably considered that such revelations would lead to diplomatic ruptures and heighten world tensions, a course they have attempted to avoid. It is certain, in any case, that of the hundreds of billions the United States and its allies have spent during the last decade to surround the Soviet Union with a ring of steel and bases, a not inconsiderable sum must have gone for the organization of bases for sabotage within the Soviet Union.

Those who recently paid \$112,000, according to Reuters of London, to the Chiang Kai-Shek agent for killing fourteen Chinese political and cultural leaders on their way to the Bandung Conference by placing a bomb in their plane, are not skimping.

The methods employed by the nazis during the last war to eliminate Soviet partisan bands illustrate the subtle ways of achieving infiltration. Most partisan groups operated from inaccessible forests. To reach them, the nazis formed "anti-fascist" partisan bands of their own, which

joined their "brothers" in the forests. To mask their identity, some of these groups accomplished what appeared to be heroic and dangerous missions, capturing nazi prisoners and trophies. Ultimately, however, they led the partisan units into a nazi trap or otherwise annihilated them. Many Communist partisan groups perished in this manner.

The tactics of counterrevolution are complex and devious.