

Lithograph by Louis Lozowick

What's Going On in the Soviet Union?

Recent events on the internal and international planes call for a reexamination of developments

By Sam Darcy

ONLY if we understand certain simple facts concerning all of the major countries of the world can we possibly understand what is happening in the Soviet Union today.

Every day the fascists feel themselves in a more difficult situation. Recent press dispatches report that Germany is suffering from increased food and raw material shortages, which have caused shut-downs of numerous factories and dismissals of workers. Even according to official figures, the crops in Germany are worse than they were at this time last year, when they were already bad.

The German, Japanese, and Italian governments have badly strained their resources by their attacks on the Ethiopian, Chinese, and Spanish people. This strain was far worse than they expected. As a consequence, the situation in these countries is becoming so tense that even the press censorship in Germany couldn't suppress the fact that a delegation of leading business men of Germany went to Hitler a few days ago to demand a change in the situation and a let-up in the strain on the country in preparation for war. And Hitler had to threaten them with arrest to get them to withdraw their demands.

All of these facts point to a situation wherein German, Japanese, and Italian fascists are impelled to press for the earliest provocation of a general world-war situation as a means of meeting their precarious internal situation.

These facts bear strongly on what is happening in the Soviet Union today.

WE MUST GO BACK to what we might arbitrarily call the beginning of this period: from 1929 to 1934. When the history of these years is considered in longer perspective, we realize that they were far more critical than we thought at that time. There were three major factors which characterized that period of four or five years: (1) The tremendous expansion and socialization of Soviet industry and the collectivization of agriculture were world-shaking phenomena, which, if lacking the dramatic force of the Russian revolution itself, certainly could be compared to any event in history as a turning point in the development of the world. (2) All capitalist countries during these years suffered from the deepest crisis the world has ever experienced. (3) There was a great rise of the fascist movement: in Germany, and subsequently the Heimwehr fascists in Austria; the rise of the French fascist movement after the events of February 6, 1934; the growth of the Heinlein fascists in Czechoslovakia, who dominate approximately one-fifth of the country; the Degrelle movement in Belgium; the Iron Guard in Rumania; the rise of fascist movements in the Scandinavian countries, in England, and even in the United States.

If you go back to this period you can see what a vast expanse of fascist activities there was all over the world. The international

fascist organizations began as propaganda units, but year by year became greater espionage and sabotage organizations in many countries, including the United States. Even in Britain, the ruling class, which for years tried to soft-pedal criticism of German fascism, was forced in 1933 openly to strike back against the German espionage organization there in the famous case of Lieut. Norman Baillie-Stewart, who was convicted of selling military secrets to a foreign power. In the United States the German fascists have been the most provocative in the East, but on the Pacific coast Japan has set up a large espionage organization, so much so that the United States last year was forced to make a demonstration in the Farnsworth case. These are agents who don't merely gather military information, but who also try to wreck industry, disrupt the peace and democratic organizations, the progressive organizations, the trade unions, every possible anti-war, anti-fascist force and aid the reactionary pro-fascist elements to win hegemony in the countries to which they have been assigned.

During these years the fascists carried out a campaign of assassination in every country of the world. The Rumanian Premier, Duca, was murdered by the Iron Guard in 1933. In 1933-4, fifteen prominent people in Czechoslovakia were abducted into Germany and never heard from. In Austria, Chancellor Dolfuss was murdered. Barthou and the pro-French king of Yugoslavia were murdered by

one of the trigger men of the Nazi organization "Ustachi" in 1934. The stiletto murders in France occurred this year. The kidnaping of the recently executed Jewish patriot Hirsch, and the notorious Jacobs case are indicative of hundreds of similar cases, many of which are never reported. Having got away with the murder of a minister, a king, a chancellor, and as yet an uncounted number of lesser officials, is it any wonder that they dared the greatest atrocity of all, their conspiracy with Franco in Spain?

During these years, Communists in the U.S.S.R. allowed a certain laxness to develop with regard to the activities of the capitalist countries, especially the fascist countries, which encircle the Soviet Union. The Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. was absorbed with the struggle to fulfill the requirements of the first Five Year Plan. The work of construction did not proceed as smoothly as it was thought in the United States. The U.S.S.R. needed metal for construction, but there was no metal available. The materials and the tremendous personnel necessary for the new construction projects had to be transported across vast spaces, but the transport system was congested and inadequate. Building material was insufficient for the great demand. The builders and factory workers needed food, clothing, and at least elementary housing; but resources and supplies and the skill to handle those vast projects were inadequate. Slovenly methods of work were still left over from the old Czarist regime. The workers had to be drawn from a peasantry of fifty generations who did not easily acquire the skill to man the new industries. There were few engineers and technicians.

During this period, the muscles and nerves of the Soviet Union were stretched like a taut wire. The Bolsheviks lived only for their construction projects. They thought, spoke, argued, and dreamed construction figures. Mobilized human will, Bolshevik persistence and purpose—all energy was directed toward fulfilling this first Five Year Plan. During this period the millions of members of the Communist Party and Young Communist League were fed badly and slept badly. Many of the best people of the party were worn out and gave their lives in this struggle. Those were years of the most heroic industrial achievement that the world has ever known.

The Soviet Union, which needed all of the technical aid that it could get, gave huge contracts and paid well to German industrial firms for proper technical help and machinery; but instead of sending in engineers, German fascism sent skilled espionage groups by the thousands into the Soviet Union. These, together with certain degenerate elements in the Soviet Union, and, it was later discovered, with the right-wingers and the Trotskyist elements, entered upon a campaign wherein they wrecked trains, put electric power stations out of action, wrecked expensive machinery, caused explosions entailing the loss of lives, deliberately drew up impractical plans, and held back construction projects. The efforts of 100,000

workers to build an industry or *combinat* [a group of functionally related production units—Ed.] were sometimes defeated by a handful of foreign agents who held positions as engineers and who succeeded in making alliances with the degenerate elements in the Soviet Union, right-wingers, and the old Czarist remnants, who had been given an opportunity to work in the Soviet Union and then abused the privilege.

Thousands of foreign spies came in as tourists and workers. The fascists and their agents took advantage of this laxness and of the pre-occupation of party members with the first Five Year Plan, and indeed, of the over-confidence as a result of its success, to intensify their spy activities in the Soviet Union. Thus for about three years the Japanese-German-Polish espionage apparatus, the elements headed by Trotsky and Pyatakov, and the right-wing elements headed by Bukharin and Radek, succeeded in combining their efforts in an interlocking organization and carried on a program of espionage, wrecking, murder, and disruption against the peoples of the U.S.S.R. This was described in detail by the Trotskyist-right wing criminals themselves in their trials last January.

I am not exactly new to trials or new to the spectacle of Trotskyist crimes. Yet I must say it took my breath away to see the utter cynicism with which those criminals recounted their experiences at the Pyatakov-Radek trials. Take Radek for example. Calmly, as if it meant nothing to him at all, while stirring his glass of tea and lemon on the witness stand, he said: "It's childish to murder one party leader or government official at a time. We must embark on a campaign of mass murder to create a panic." Consider Muralov, the confidante of Trotsky whom the Trotskyites and Socialists hail as an "old Bolshevik": "I am a soldier," he said, "and I can say that guerrilla warfare in this situation is not sufficient. We must have planned mass warfare against the government and the party." Shestov, who looked like the ape-man among them, was a mining-school student who on graduation was given an opportunity which a graduate in a capitalist country rarely if ever has. He was put in charge of construction in one of the most important mining centers of the country. Shestov had been placed there with the connivance of Pyatakov. He testified: "At my suggestion, in a certain place where dynamite was stored we managed to steal dynamite with the help of the technician

Kan, and set up our secret store of dynamite. In 1934 the store was discharged. Miners' children who were playing not far from this place were probably digging and hit upon this dynamite. A terrific explosion took place." Ten of the kids were killed and several maimed for life.

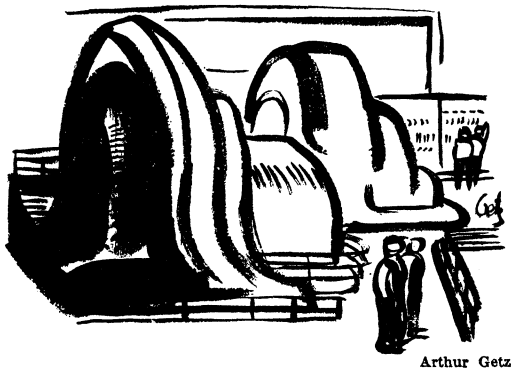
The extent of such crimes was enormous. Ventilation tubes in the Kemerovo mines were shut off, killing ten miners and wounding fourteen. Again, twenty-nine Red Army men were killed, and twenty-nine wounded in a railroad wreck at Shamikha station. An attempt was made on the life of Comrade Molotov; the saboteurs and wreckers accumulated 50,000,000 rubles' worth of raw materials standing idle on railroad sidings, to prevent the operation of industry; they deliberately organized fifteen major wrecks, and 1500 minor ones by such tricks as sending out locomotives with faulty pressure gauges so that locomotive engineers were blown to bits by exploding boilers. They robbed 164,000 rubles from the bank at Anzhero-Sujensky, which was distributed amongst their criminal gangs.

They committed treason; their Moscow Center reached agreements with the Japanese and German embassies for the partition of the Soviet Union, for the granting of concessions to foreign capitalism, for the return of capitalism to the U.S.S.R. They agreed to perpetrate a series of treasonable measures in time of war, including the destruction of military trains and the infection of the Red Army with bacteria.

And all the time Pyatakov, Serebryakov, Radek, Sokolnikov hung in the background, hoping that something would happen—not like Dickens's Micawber, sitting back and being good-natured—but plotting with Germany and Japan, with every disruptive agent within the country, to make something happen that would weaken the Soviet Communist Party and destroy the first workers' government.

BUT TWO THINGS defeated them. First, the success of the construction of socialism. Why did that defeat them? Because through its success the remnants of capitalist classes were liquidated; the kulaks were liquidated as a class; the nepmen were liquidated as a class; and the conspirators did not have these classes to maneuver with. Inevitably their conspiracies became the plots of generals who could find no army, and in proportion to the extent that they were isolated from the people, precisely in that proportion did they increase their viciousness and multiply their desperate acts.

The second thing that defeated them was the tremendous improvement in the living standards of the people. To build a *combinat* during the first Five Year Plan meant tremendous hardship. People had to wear their old clothes and do without simple luxuries. But at the end of the first Five Year Plan consumers' goods had greatly increased. Ration cards and other such things that had worked difficulties and hardship on the people were eliminated, and almost overnight a tremendous flow of consumers' goods began, and new distribution



Arthur Getz

*Child Labor*

Lithograph by Hyman Warsager (People's Print Group Series)

enterprises were opened up on a large scale. Those people who were misled by the Trotskyites now asked themselves, "Was our anti-Soviet program correct?" The answer caused them to desert their secret conspirative organizations and volunteer information concerning them to the Soviet and party authorities. Trotsky had written in his letters to them: "You will see, conditions in the country must become progressively worse. There will even be a serious collapse in the harvest and in industry. The Five Year Plan is a tragic joke." Those who had been duped by the Trotskyites saw these predictions prove false, and in considerable numbers they turned on their fellow-conspirators. This is the secret of how, in such a comparatively short time, the Soviet Union has been able to uncover the conspiracies despite their great extent.

The capitalist class tries to pretend that this is a sign of the weakness of the Soviet Union. Certainly it was a weakness of the Soviet Union when the degenerate traitors succeeded in carrying on their work without being discovered when the Soviet Union was still confronted with the difficulties of the first Five Year Plan. Today, however, they are too late. A weakness discovered and corrected ceases to be a weakness.

Norman Thomas admitted on his return from the Soviet Union that he saw improvement in conditions, that the Soviet Union is very strong, but he said that among the people there is a "feeling of fear" due to the uncovering of this espionage machine. I would like to have a list of the people amongst whom he circulated. Maybe he would find, as Shakespeare says, that their fear is born of consciousness of guilt. As a matter of fact, the uncovering of this espionage machine, rather than causing "fear," actually relaxed the tension of the country as nothing else has done.

The story of Boyarshimov illustrates my point. Boyarshimov had been a wrecker in the earlier Ramsin period. But he soon realized he was a fool, and loyally tried to make good for himself and for his profession. He came back and worked hard in the mining industry. But everything he did was frustrated. Hardly had shafts been sunk when the timbering collapsed; hardly had a new ventilation system been built when for some reason or other it broke down and caused gas explosions. He repeatedly showed up the faults which caused these disasters. But his superior engineer said: "You are too inexperienced to know, and besides, you had better not say anything anyhow. If you give us any trouble—remember, you're a

wrecker." Finally, Boyarshimov went to Shes-tov, his chief of construction, the same ape-man I have been telling you about. He said, "I am not making good at this job, and I know it is not my fault. They are digging the shafts in the wrong places. Everything is going wrong. I think there's wrecking going on." But Shes-tov was the very one who was directing this wrecking. He answered, "Keep it under your hat for a few days, and give me a chance to investigate." The next day Boyarshimov was found murdered.

What created fear among the people, the murder of Boyarshimov or the exposure of the wreckers? Is it not clear that when people discovered the source of all of this wrecking and terror in the country that the feeling of uneasiness was lifted and a great liberating influence released? Norman Thomas has not rid himself of the Trotskyist taint which pollutes his viewpoint. How does Thomas explain the fact that, when Kirov was murdered, he never had the decency to send condolences to the Soviet Union, but when the band of assassins was caught and tried, he wired the Soviet Union *not* to punish them, to be merciful? Now he is accusing the people's government in Spain of "political gangsterism" because they arrested the murderous Trotskyist putschists in

Catalonia who helped Franco behind the lines by organizing an uprising. His paper—*Socialist Call*, July 3—even calls for picketing demonstrations against the—Italian or German? no—Spanish consulate! Such solicitous care for counter-revolution!

The *New York Times*, in its issue of June 17, joins editorially with those who cry about the loss of Soviet prestige because of the execution of the Trotskyist espionage agents who had wormed their way into the Red Army, and because the Soviet Union took certain measures to strengthen the Red Army politically. The execution of Tukhachevsky, it says: "coupled with the reaccession to power of the political at the expense of the military has caused the Soviet army a loss of 'face' and has destroyed much of that prestige as a military machine which Tukhachevsky had built up."

The source of the Red Army strength is its political character. The Red Guard of 1917-18 did not win because it had greater military training. But its military weakness was more than compensated for by its political character. And this was true in Madrid and Guadalajara, in China, and in our own American Revolution. A revolutionary cause cannot ever be defeated by some internal traitor—as the failure of Benedict Arnold proved. But added to this, the Red Army is today one of the best trained, best organized and disciplined, and best equipped armies in the world.

The fascists gloat over the support they received from the few isolated wretched adventurers in the U.S.S.R. If they speculate upon success in militaristic adventures based upon such support, let them remember that the support for the Soviet Union in their own countries is based not on a few adventurers, but on large masses.

Recent developments in the expansion of Soviet democracy have an important bearing on what we see happening in the U.S.S.R. Comrade Stalin pointed out in his speech to the last plenum of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that they had reached the point in the U.S.S.R. where it was necessary to utilize the eagerness of the masses to fight the wreckers, and that this should be done through the widest development of Soviet democracy not only in the country as a whole but also in the Communist Party. He pointed out that many functionaries had become bogged down in their bureaucratic seats, and must be and in fact are being rapidly eliminated.

How critical the judgment of the Soviet party members is of individuals who do not remain alert, active, and growing leaders of the party, is shown by the fact that in the Communist Party elections which have just taken place (with the secret ballot used for the first time) there are districts in which a substantial part of the local leadership was defeated. The vote of the masses against these lax elements was particularly strong in precisely those districts where the Trotskyist espionage agents and wreckers succeeded in functioning to the greatest extent, particularly in the Ukraine, which is the special concentration point for

German Nazi espionage and Trotskyist activity.

It is sometimes asked: how is it that so many had to be arrested and brought to trial for having participated in these activities? What is the source of so many traitors? The answer is that problem of personnel is one of the most difficult problems the Soviet Union has to face. It has yet to be fully solved.

At the time the Russian revolution took place, the Soviet party had approximately 140,000 members. These 140,000 had to supply the trusted personnel for manning a vast country more than three times the size of the United States with 50 percent more population. It was necessary to enlist the aid of millions of non-Communist elements, most of whom have since become loyal and devoted workers; but a few of whom, die-hard white-guardist, Trotskyist, or other enemy elements could not give up the fight for their class so easily. By every intrigue they wormed their way into leading posts and by every compromise held them. Their hand was forced when they saw their last mass base in the kulak and nepmen classes liquidated, and they struck desperately and under conditions unfavorable for them.

THE SOVIET UNION is initiating the third Five Year Plan. It far exceeds the tasks set in the first. But it will be fulfilled much more easily. That which took a heroic effort before is being done as a matter of routine today.

For example: a small but very significant item appeared recently in the press. The Kharkov tractor plant announced that one section of the tractor plant was no longer needed for tractors, so they were turning over that section of the plant to the manufacture of electric refrigerators for workers' homes. That small item indicates the difference in circumstances between the first and the third Five Year Plans. Today they have reached the point where they can begin to supply not only the basic needs of an industrial country but also the luxuries to which the Soviet people are justly entitled.

The R.S.F.S.R. [Russia proper—Ed.], which is the leading industrial republic of the Soviet Union, plans to increase its industrial output threefold, as compared to its present figures. According to the third Five Year Plan, the Soviet Union as a whole will produce three times as many passenger coaches for railroads as have been constructed during the first and second Five Year Plans combined. The People's Commissariat of Agriculture expects a 250 percent increase in consumption of meat and milk as a result of live-stock developments. The total length of civil airways is expected to increase approximately from 40,000 to 53,000 miles. This does not include development of local airways, which will add another 38,000 miles. The air achievements of the U.S.S.R. already have put the U.S.S.R. forward as the leading civil-aviation country of the world. These figures will give you an idea of the vast progress that has been made, a progress dramatized by the successful polar flight of the three Soviet air heroes.

The very industries, such as railroads, mines, and chemicals, upon which the wreckers concentrated their fiercest efforts, are today reaching levels of production and efficiency which compare favorably with the most modern capitalist countries which have had many scores of years of development.

In its early stages there was a general tendency to consider that the fight against Trotskyism was the fight of the Soviet peoples chiefly. The Soviet peoples will have no difficulty in wiping out the last vestige of Trotskyism. The full guarantee for that does not lie in the Department of Internal Affairs (or the so-called G.P.U.), or in the efficiency of any police or administrative apparatus. It lies in that which was manifested in the last May first celebration: the unparalleled enthusiasm and devotion of the masses of people for the country and their desire to defend their gains that have become especially evident to them in the last three years.

But the fight against Trotskyism in the capitalist countries is not such a simple thing. There they have powerful allies. The policies of the Trotskyites in the capitalist countries are identical with and differ only in formulation and in the masks they wear from the policies of Hitlerism. The Trotskyites are opposed to the people's front; so is Hitler. The Trotskyites fight against the people's movement in France; so does Hitler. The Trotskyites have tried to organize a war in the rear against the people's front government in Spain [See James Hawthorne's article in this issue.—Ed.] which distinctly supplements the trench warfare of Hitler. The Trotskyites are trying to disrupt the trade unions in all countries, which corresponds precisely to the policy of Hitler. Trotskyites slander the Soviet Union, exactly as do the fascists.

This coincidence of program is not accidental and not the result merely of a general historical development. As the trials showed, it was the result of conferences between Trotsky's son Sedov, who acted as the agent of the Trotskyites, and Rudolph Hess, the deputy of Hitler. This is the united front of Trotsky with Hitler against the Soviet Union and the people's-front movement. This must be emphasized again and again so that Trotskyites are not regarded as a current in the labor movement. The Trotskyites are infiltrating all progressive movements to disrupt them. They have become one of the chief weapons of the fascists, their cheapest weapon too, because some espionage agents are much more expensive. Trotskyism menaces not only the Soviet Union but the unity of the workers and people's progressive movements of the world. The struggle against Trotskyism in the United States must be carried on because it is part of the struggle in defense of the unity of our working class and the people's front movement for peace. The whole world must rise up against fascist conspiracy, espionage, and intrigue if it is to maintain those liberties we yet have—and for this the cheap and facile Trotskyist agents of fascism must be rapidly eliminated from decadent democratic society.