

NEWS BULLETIN

AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF LEON TROTSKY

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This Committee Exists (1) To Safeguard Trotsky's Right to Asylum and (2) to further the Organization of an Impartial Commission of Inquiry.

BULLETIN No. 3.

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FEBRUARY 3, 1937.

MOSCOW DEFENDANTS SHOT DESPITE WEIGHTY COUNTER-EVIDENCE GIVEN BY NORWEGIANS

Demand For Check On Facts Unheeded

By LEON TROTSKY

MEXICO, D. F., Jan. 27.—All the accusations are based exclusively upon the confessions of the defendants; no objective evidence whatsoever is at the disposition of the court. Consequently one must ask: Are the defendants' confessions true, or are they the result of a preliminary agreement extorted by the accusers from the accused? The fate of the trial and the world reputation of Moscow justice, on the one hand, and of the movement to which I adhere, on the other, depend on the solution of this fundamental enigma. No efforts must be spared to reveal the truth. Is this aim obtainable? Completely, and without great difficulty. The question is posed as follows: do the subjective confessions correspond to objective facts, or are they the products of malicious fabrication divorced from time and space?

I propose immediately, before the trial is terminated, to choose the most striking and important confession and submit it to factual verification. This procedure would require scarcely more than forty-eight hours.

We are concerned here with the confession of Piatakov. He testified that he visited me in Norway in December, 1935, for the purpose of conspiratorial plotting. Piatakov alleged that he came from Berlin to Oslo by airplane. The enormous importance of this testimony is evident. I declared many times, and I repeat again, that Piatakov, like Radek, has been during the last nine years not my friend but my bitterest and most perfidious enemy, and that there could be no question of negotiations between us. If it should be proved that Piatakov actually visited me, my position would be hopelessly compromised. If, on the contrary, I can prove that the story of the visit is false from beginning to end, the entire system of "voluntary" confessions would be thoroughly discredited. Even if we should admit that the Moscow trial is beyond all suspicion, the defendant Piatakov remains suspect. His testimony must be verified immediately, before he is shot, by putting to him the following series of questions:

1. On what day did Piatakov come from Moscow to Berlin, in December, 1935? What was his official mission? Piatakov is too important an administrative figure to make the trip in such a manner that it would not be known to the Soviet government. The day of his departure must be known in his Commissariat. The German press must have announced his arrival.

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Why?

Georgyi Piatakov and 12 other defendants in the recent Moscow trial were shot twenty-four hours after an official announcement was made in Oslo proving Piatakov's "confession" was false.

Five days before the executions, while the trial was still in progress, Trotsky publicly asked for factual verification of Piatakov's decisive testimony concerning his airplane trip to Oslo. He listed 13 specific points, which could be checked and counter-checked with Piatakov and with officials and others in Norway. He asked that this check be made before Piatakov was shot.

Acting on their own initiative the Oslo authorities conducted an investigation of their own and announced to the world that no such airplane as that described by Piatakov in his "confession" ever came to Oslo.

This information was officially wired to Andrey Vishinsky, the Soviet prosecutor, on Jan. 31.

Nevertheless on Feb. 1 Piatakov and the others were shot!

What did the Moscow prosecutors fear?

The day before the executions the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky wired to Stalin himself asking for a stay of sentence for the accused "pending investigation by an impartial commission of inquiry composed of genuine friends of the Soviet Union." This appeal too went unheeded.

We repeat: What are the Moscow authorities afraid of?

Why do they hasten to shoot men although the most serious doubt has been raised as to the validity of their testimony?

These questions can only be answered when all the evidence has been studied and sifted by a group of men in whom world public opinion can put its unquestioning trust. This means the creation of an IMPARTIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY!

RUSH FUNDS!!

Do you want to continue receiving bulletins like this?

Money Is Needed!

Send your Contributions to
SUZANNE LAFOLLETTE, Treasurer
American Committee for the Defense of
Leon Trotsky

Room 511, 22 East 17 St., New York City

Piatakov's "Airplane Trip" Proved Phony

(By Special Cable)

OSLO, Jan. 31.—The Norwegian authorities today announced that no private or foreign plane landed during December, 1935, at Kjeller Airport, where Georgyi Piatakov said he arrived in a private German plane to see Leon Trotsky.

Investigation of the official airport records, it was officially announced, proved conclusively that Piatakov's testimony was false.

These official findings were wired to Andrey Vishinsky by Konrad Knudsen, editor of the Norwegian Labor Party organ at Honefoss, who was Trotsky's host during his stay in Norway.

Knudsen also informed Vishinsky that he was personally ready to certify, as Trotsky's host, that Piatakov never came to his home to see Trotsky.

This information was recognized here as a decisive blow at the whole structure of the case against Leon Trotsky as the "leader" of the supposed conspiracies described during the recent Moscow trials.

It was through Piatakov that Trotsky was supposed to have given his "instructions" concerning sabotage in Soviet industry. Other alleged links between Trotsky and the conspirators existed, it was claimed in the form of letters. Not one of these letters, it was pointed out, was produced as evidence.

"Pure Invention," Says Herald

LONDON, Jan. 29. — Investigations in Oslo which prove that no private plane reached there from Berlin or anywhere else in December, 1935, practically destroys the 'confession' of Georgyi Piatakov at the Moscow trial, the Daily Herald, Labor Party organ, declared today.

"It has been established by the Norwegian press (announced officially two days later—Ed.) that in December no private plane came to Oslo from Berlin," the Herald said. "This is one point—but in this important point the 'confession' can be proved to be pure invention, and that deprives the whole of it of any value as evidence."

HEAR TROTSKY AT THE N. Y. HIPPODROME, ON FEBRUARY 9!!

(Continued from Page 1)

2. Did Piatakov visit the Soviet Embassy in Berlin? Whom did he meet?

3. When and how did he fly from Berlin to Oslo? If he came to Berlin openly, he must have left secretly: it is impossible to conceive of the Soviet government sending Piatakov to plot with Trotsky.

4. What kind of passport did Piatakov use when he left Berlin? How did he obtain this false passport? Did he also obtain a Norwegian visa?

5. If we admit for a moment that Piatakov embarked upon this trip legally and openly, his arrival must have been announced in the Norwegian press. In that case, who were the Norwegian authorities whom he must have visited officially?

6. If Piatakov came to Oslo illegally, with a false passport, how did he succeed in disappearing from the keen eyes of the Soviet officials in Berlin and Oslo? (Every Soviet administrator abroad remains in permanent telegraphic and telephonic communication with the embassies and commercial agencies of the U.S.S.R.) How did he explain his disappearance upon his return to Russia?

7. At what time did Piatakov arrive in Oslo? Did he pass the night in the town, and if so, in what hotel? (We hope it was not in the Bristol Hotel.) The well-known Norwegian paper *Aftenposten* affirms that at the time mentioned by Piatakov, no foreign plane landed in Oslo. This must be verified.

8. Did Piatakov inform me beforehand of his contemplated visit by the regular telegraphic channels of communication? This can easily be verified in the telegraphic offices of Oslo and Honefoss.

9. How did Piatakov locate me in the village Veksal? What means of transportation did he use?

10. The trip from Oslo to my village required at least two hours; the conversation, according to Piatakov, took three hours; and the return trip required two more hours. December days are short; Piatakov must inevitably have passed one night in Norway. Again: where? In what hotel? How did he depart from Oslo: by train, ship, or airplane? For what destination?

11. All of my visitors will confirm that it was possible to come in contact with me only through the members of the family of our host, Knudsen, or through my secretaries, who remained on permanent guard duty before my room. With whom did Piatakov meet?

12. In what way did Piatakov make the trip in the evening from Veksal to the station of Honefoss: in the automobile of our host Knudsen, or by taxi summoned by telephone by Honefoss? In either case, the departure, like the arrival, could not have been accomplished without witnesses.

13. Did Piatakov also meet my wife? Was she at home on the day in question? (My wife's trips to her doctor and dentist in Oslo can easily be established.)

It is necessary to add that the appearance of Piatakov is striking and easily remembered: tall, blond with tinges of red in his hair and beard, very regular features, high forehead, glasses, and very lean (in 1927, when I saw him for the last time, he was exceedingly thin).

Not only a lawyer, but every thinking man as well, will understand the decisive importance of these questions for the purpose of the verification of Piatakov's confessions. The Soviet government has the full possibility to utilize the services of Norwegian justice (it was obliged to do this even before the trial).

The authoritative political figures of Norway can immediately, without the slightest delay in waiting for the initiative of the Moscow court, create a special commission for the investigation of all the circumstances connected with the alleged arrival of Piatakov in Norway.

In passing, the same commission could investigate the matters concerning the accused Shestov, who is totally unknown to me, but who declared that he had received written instructions from me in Norway

HEAR LEON TROTSKY

who will telephone his answer to his accusers in a one-hour speech to be heard only at the

HIPPODROME

Sixth Avenue and 43rd Street

on

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, at 8 P. M.

Trotsky will speak in English for 45 minutes and in Russian for 15 minutes.

Other Speakers

ANGELICA BALABANOFF

First Secretary of the Communist International

ROY BURT

National Executive Secretary, Socialist Party U.S.A.

MAX SHACHTMAN

Editor, Trotsky's Works

GEORGE NOVACK

Secretary, Trotsky Defense Committee

and other liberal and labor speakers.

TICKETS ON SALE AT ROOM 511, 22 E. 17 St.; LABOR BOOKSHOP, 28 East 12 Street; Call Bookstore, 21 East 17 Street; Columbia University Bookstore, and at the Hippodrome Box Office: Orchestra, \$1; Circle, 50c; Balcony, 25c.

Auspices:

AMERICAN COMMITTEE for the DEFENSE of LEON TROTSKY
Room 511, 22 East 17 Street, New York City

MASS MEETINGS on the MOSCOW TRIALS

CHICAGO

NORMAN THOMAS

Socialist Leader

Albert Goldman

Editor, Socialist Appeal

FRANK McCULLOUGH

Chairman

at

CAPITOL BUILDING

159 North State Street

Drill Hall

SUNDAY, FEB. 14, 1937 - 8 P.M.

Auspices:

Socialist Party of Cook County, Ill.

BOSTON

MAX SHACHTMAN

Editor, Trotsky's Works

Gus Tyler

Editor, Socialist Call

James Rorty

Writer, Lecturer, Journalist

Chairman

Richard Babb Whitten

Former Director Commonwealth College

at

OLD SOUTH MEETING HOUSE

Washington and Milk Street

FRIDAY, EVE., FEB. 12, 1937

8 P. M.

Auspices:

American Committee for the Defense of
Leon Trotsky

New England Sub-Committee

86 Leverett Street, Boston

(?) for Piatakov and concealed them in the soles of his shoes. When, how, and under what circumstances did he visit me? What Norwegian shoemaker concealed the alleged documents for him? How did Shestov find this conspiratorial shoemaker? And so on.

Are the president of the court and the prosecutor ready to put these cogent questions to Piatakov? Their attitude in this connection should be decisive for the trial in the eyes of all honest people throughout the world.

I hope that all the papers interested in the truth will publish this statement in full.

HEARST REPUDIATED

The following telegram was received at Committee headquarters from Leon Trotsky:

"Rumors concerning articles sold to Hearst absolutely false. All articles and statements concerning the trial are not being sold but are given gratuitously to the press. They are not given to the Hearst press and Universal Service, because of their connection with Fascism and reaction throughout the world.

Leon Trotsky"