



NEW PURGE IN RUSSIA

Scapegoats for the Regime

The "Observer" of April 25th reports the beginning of a new purge in Russia.

"The past ten days have seen the first faint but unmistakable signs of a new Soviet witch-hunt the victims this time being chiefly the manufacturers of consumer goods. Last week every newspaper in the U.S.S.R. carried an important statement issued by the Public Prosecutor's office announcing the conviction of a select list of officials and technicians for turning out goods of inferior quality."

"The chief engineer of a Grozny factory, run by the Ministry of Local Industry, was sentenced to five years' deprivation of liberty for producing inferior bicycles. The chief engineer of a Leningrad felt factory, under the same Ministry, got two years for producing bad quality felt footwear the traditional felt winter boots called 'vablenky'. The head of a bakery in Chalov Province was given five years for allowing the systematic production of inferior bread."

"Three senior officials of an open-cast coal mine in Irkutsk Province were sentenced for turning out sub-standard coal (six years and five years). Further offenders are awaiting trial, among them the director of a Moscow clothing factory and his two chief technical assistants."

The background for this new purge is the gathering discontent of the workers who see that the main benefits of the successes of

affect the standard of living of the broad masses.

There are less motor cars and other luxury goods per head of the population in Russia than in such advanced countries as Britain, where despite the higher standard of living the overwhelming majority of the workers do not own even the cheapest motor car.

The correspondent of the "Observer" remarks correctly "A fortnight ago certain price reductions were announced as a measure of the first importance, and occasion was taken to stress the rapid increase in the purchasing power of the rouble, which was said to have gone up by over 50% since December. But the new price cuts will hardly affect the real cost of living in Russia, which is a matter of food and clothing of the most elementary kind—above all new clothing. Bicycles, motor-cycles, gramophones, sporting rifles, opera glasses, cameras, sewing machines, and wrist-watches, which all figure in the list, are luxury goods as far as Russia is concerned, and almost the only items which will affect the mass of the people are vodka and beer."

But clothes and food (apart from enlure) remain unaffected; and on the average income it still takes a month's work to buy a pair of shoes and three months' work to buy a suit of clothes."

Thus the abolition of rationing largely benefits the bureaucracy, not the masses.

Only the abolition of bureaucracy can determine that the Plan is operated in the interests of the masses, both as regards kind,

The "Moskvitch" for Bureaucrats

Russia's latest record. No favoured members of the bureaucracy is the 10,000 rouble Moskvitch car, descendant of the pre-war car Kim 10. First buyers of Kim 10 included artists, writers and Stakhanovite workers. Taking the rouble at 10d. (fair estimate of its spending power), the new car costs roughly the equivalent of £410 in British money. A high estimate of a Russian worker's average wage is 400 roubles per month.



industrialisation and the reconstruction of the economy are reaped by the upper strata of the bureaucracy.

The articles of mass consumption are of shockingly low quality, further aggravating the already low standards of the masses. The purge is intended to divert the attention of the masses from the real criminals, and to make sections of the lower ranks of the bureaucracy especially the scapegoats for the crimes and failures of the whole bureaucratic regime.

Stalinist propaganda in this country made great play of the reduction in prices, announced in Russia recently. But it must have been obvious to anyone who gave the problem a moment's thought that reductions in the price of motor cars, for instance, could not

quantity and quality of products produced. But the bureaucracy will not give up its tyrannous domination over the masses, its power and privileges. Consequently, they try constantly by means of repressions and the fining of scapegoats to divert the attention of the masses from the real root of the evils which beset them; arbitrary and uncontrolled rule by the officialdom.

However, these events mirror the pressure of the Russian workers and peasants. They are proof of the fact that it is impossible for the bureaucracy to establish itself securely. In the long run the Russian masses will overthrow the bureaucracy and introduce the Soviet system of true workers democracy as it existed in the days of Lenin and Trotsky.

Negro Mothers' Death Sentence

Commuted to Life Imprisonment

Mass protests by Labour, Trade Union and progressive organisations in America against the death sentences for Mrs. Rosa Ingram, Negro mother of 12, and her two sons, Sammy, 14, and Wallace, 16, have won a first victory.

Judge William M. Hiner, of Americus, Georgia, who sentenced the Ingram family to the electric chair for the self-defence slaying of a white farmer, has been forced to commute the sentence to life imprisonment.

The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, it is believed, will appeal the case to higher courts in the battle to free the Ingrams.

Mrs. Ingram, a sharecropper, was attacked by a white neighbour when her pigs wandered into his fields. Armed with a rifle, he threatened to shoot her and when she grabbed

the rifle he beat her severely. At this point her two teen-age sons ran to the aid of their bleeding mother. A blow on the head resulted in the death of the white farmer.

The Ingrams were immediately hauled off to jail, denied legal rights and found guilty by an all-white jury. The landlord confiscated the livestock and tools of the Ingram family. The remaining Ingram children, the youngest of whom is 17 months, have been living in a tiny shack since the imprisonment of their widowed mother.

Mass protest has saved the Ingrams from the electric chair. Mass action must now be organised to free Mrs. Ingram and her two children from the Georgia prisons.

"MILITANT"
(U.S.A. Trotskyist Organ)

WALL STREET VICTORY IN ITALY

by TED GRANT

THE VICTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS IN THE ITALIAN ELECTIONS MARKS A DECISIVE SET-BACK FOR THE STALINISTS AND A VICTORY FOR WALL STREET AND THE "WESTERN BLOC" IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE DOMINATION OF EUROPE.

The polls took place on the background of direct intervention by Anglo-American imperialism with threats to cut off all aid if the Italians voted for the "Popular Front" lists dominated by the Communist Party. During the election period America and Britain attempted to undermine the Stalinists by offering to support the return of Trieste to Italy.

According to reports from the State Department £1,000,000 was spent from a special fund for the purpose of supporting the struggle against "Communism" in Italy. Thus, as after World War I, the weapon of food and other support is used to back up the forces of counter-revolution in Europe.

MASS MOVEMENTS

When the election campaign commenced the Allied reaction was not at all sure of the victory of their puppets in Italy. Ever since the fall of Mussolini the peninsula has been the scene of a tremendous upsurge on the part of the Italian masses. The disillusionment by Allied troops and the ending of the war has been intense. Over the past two years the hungry Italian masses have moved into action again and again. Strike struggles in Milan, Turin, Genoa and other cities by the industrial workers have been followed by a movement of the agricultural workers in the Po Valley and, emulating their example of the landed labourers and peasants in the formerly backward south. In September of last year a million agricultural workers struck in the Po Valley, the strike spreading to Veneto, Rovigo and Ferrara Provinces. They were followed by 900,000 steel workers who struck in the same month, and 40,000 technicians and employees in textiles. A million workers in Rome, Turin and other large cities demonstrated against the hunger government. An agricultural strike involving 30,000 to 60,000 took place near the capital and several thousand peasants seized the land. Sympathy strikes of the workers took place in Civitavecchia and Monte Rotondo.

C.P. PRESSED

FOR COALITION

However, as late as September 29th in the Italian Parliament, Togliatti the C.P. leader denied any revolutionary intentions and again pressed the demand for a new coalition with the Christian Democrats. Clearly the C.P. was using the revolutionary language of the masses for the purpose of arriving at an agreement with Italian capitalism in the interests of Russian foreign policy. Now this policy has reaped its reward in the election and has helped in the turning of Italian capitalism firmly in the direction of Washington. It is interesting to note that in the same debate the Uomo Qualunque, a semi-fascist party also asked for the co-operation of the Christian Democrats.

THROWN OUT BY GOVERNMENT

The employers and landowners having successfully used the Stalinists and Socialists in the Cabinet in order to prevent the workers from seizing control, and having rebuilt an apparatus of repression, at the behest of Wall Street, threw the Stalinists and Socialists out of the Government. Meanwhile reaction had so consolidated itself that the Fascists began their series of provocations and murders against the militant elements within the working class. It was on this basis that the workers replied by militant strike action against the premises and organisations of the fascists. With the militant mood of the workers the Government was powerless and it would have been possible for the Stalinists and Socialists to overthrow the Government without any serious resistance.

But afraid of the repercussions of direct revolutionary action on the part of the masses the Stalinists held them back, hoping to come to power through a general election. They wished to gain control from the top, supplemented by a movement from the bottom so that they could maintain control of the movement throughout and speedily bureaucratise and strangle it on the lines of the movement in Czechoslovakia. This is the explanation of their failure to seize control during the last couple of years when power was in their grasp.

REACTION UNITED

The Vatican, the industrialists and the landlords united in an intensive drive to rally round the Christian Democrats. Using the events in Czechoslovakia as a basis, they raised the danger of Stalinist totalitarianism as a means to scare the middle class and indifferent and backward elements, large numbers of whom were normally too apathetic even to vote, in order to drive them to the polls.

Despite the chronic misery of the workers and peasants and the destitution of 1,500,000 unemployed they succeeded in this objective. And their success marks a definite change of relationship between the workers and the capitalists, and the Stalinist bureaucracy and Anglo-American imperialism since the

end of the war. Through the Marshall Plan the imperialists hope to prop up capitalism in the West and prepare for the future conflict with the Soviet Union. This is the fruit of the policy of Stalinism in Western Europe.

STALINISTS CONFUSE THE WORKERS

Instead of explaining the role of the Church and of the capitalists, instead of attacking the hypocrisy of capitalist nationalism and putting forward the idea of international Socialism, the Stalinists vied with the reaction in frenzied chauvinism; this in their attacks on America. Instead of explaining the need for workers and peasants control of the state, the Stalinists competed with the capitalist parties in demagogic about constitutionalism, liberty and democracy. Their attempts to paint the Czech crisis as one settled purely by constitutional means could not impress any wavering elements as anything but cynical lies. The Stalinists had voted in the Constituent Assembly for the Lateran Treaty between Mussolini and the Vatican to become part of the Constitution. This makes Catholicism the state religion and gives the Church special privileges in the schools and in the country. They guided the revolutionary movement of the masses into harmless channels.

POPULAR BLOC HAD GAINED

However, with the Stalinists and Socialists forced out of the Government and in opposition during the last few months, there was a steady growth in the influence of the Popular Bloc, composed of the Socialists supporting Nenni, the Communist Party and some other small groups. For the first time they began to penetrate the backward peasant masses in the former stronghold of the Right Wing, the Southern part of Italy. In the municipal elections of November 8th in 143 municipalities including Rome, Naples, Genoa, Turin, Florence and Palermo the Popular Bloc emerged as the strongest force.

| The C.P.-S.P. Bloc secured 775,915 votes | |
|--|------------|
| Christian Democrats | 379,588 .. |
| Uomo Qualunque | 231,168 .. |
| Liberals | 122,551 .. |
| Monarchists | 97,041 .. |
| Republicans | 58,639 .. |
| Other Parties | 21,889 .. |

TENDENCY REVERSED

But this tendency was sharply reversed in the present general election. In nearly all the cities, even of the industrial North, the Christian Democrat poll topped that of the Popular Bloc. In the 1946 general election the C.P., S.P. and the Action Party received 9,421,229 votes together amounting to 41.1% of the votes, the Christian Democrats 8,082,208 votes or 35.2% and other Right Wing parties the balance. Now the Popular Front received 8,025,990 or 30.7% together with the Socialist Unity Party who split from the Nenni Socialist Party and received 1,860,528 or 7% of the votes, a total of 9,886,518 votes. This is 465,000 more than the last election but only 37.7% of the total vote or 3.4% less than formerly. The Christian Democrats gathering round themselves polled 12,751,841 votes or 48.7% of the total this time. This represented an increase of nearly 4 1/2 million votes. Most of the Right Wing parties did badly but the split-away fascist grouping from the Uomo Qualunque, putting up candidates for the first time received 525,408 votes. Three years after the war and despite the experience of 20 years of fascism they can now come forward and dare to flaunt their doctrines in the face of the working class.

PRESENT SITUATION

The Stalinists apparently intend to accept the swing of Italy over to the Anglo-American bloc for the

time being. In the meantime some of the Nenni Socialists led by the former Socialist Minister of the Interior apparently intend to split towards the Right Wing Saragat Grouping which is to become part of the coalition Government with the Christian Democrats. The Stalinist, di Vittorio, secretary-general of the Italian T.U.C., which is dominated by the Communist Party, declared on the Marshall Plan (according to the "Daily Herald" of 22nd April and not denied by the C.P.). "When someone wants to help you, it is ridiculous to slap him in the face."

NO LASTING SOLUTION

The American imperialists are preparing to rush supplies to Italy. The Allies are already discussing bringing Italy into the Western Bloc, i.e., the joint conspiracy against the Socialist revolution in Europe and for ultimate war against the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, de Gasperi is selecting and training a police force from which "subversive forces" have been weeded out and which the Italian capitalists consider will be entirely reliable for use against the workers. With the lack of a revolutionary alternative the capitalists, especially with Marshall aid may succeed in temporarily stabilising the situation. But such a situation cannot endure for many years. The Christian Democrats, like all the middle-of-the-way capitalist exploiters of the middle class are doomed to break up. The urban middle class and the peasants will swing away to Right and to Left. As the correspondent of the "Daily Mail" remarks with foreboding, a permanent solution has not at all been attained. The temporary stamped of the middle class and backward peasants and workers can rapidly change on the basis of the crisis of capitalism in Italy. This crisis cannot be fundamentally eliminated even with Marshall aid. A new polarisation of the classes is inevitable. In the coming days the membership of the C.P. too, will begin to ask why the C.P. fails to give a revolutionary lead.

The alternative will inexorably be posed; either the conquest of power by the workers led by a genuine revolutionary Communist Party or the crushing of the workers and their organisations in a new fascist dictatorship.

EVERY WORKERS' LIBRARY SHOULD CONTAIN:

The First Five Years of the Comintern

By LEON TROTSKY



(Recently Published)

10/-

ESSENTIAL TO EVERY WORKER JUST OUT!

THE MENACE OF FASCISM

What it is and how to fight it