

The Moscow Trials



From the memoirs of Sam Darcy ----

National Committee of the American Communist Party;

Head of Party youth wing (Young Workers League); U.S

Delegate to Communist International in Moscow

About the author:

Samuel Adams Darcy (1905-2005) was born Samuel Dardeck in the Ukraine of Jewish background. He was a leading member of the CPUSA for some twenty years (1925-44), and also held a number of important positions in the Communist International. From 1925-27 he was head of the Party's youth organization, the Young Workers League. He helped organize the first mass demonstration of the unemployed in New York City in March 1930.

From 1931-36 Darcy headed Communist Party's work in California. There he played a leading role in the longshore and San Francisco general strike of 1934. In September 1940 Darcy was indicted on charges of perjury for allegedly having incorrectly stated his name and birthplace in registering to vote in California in 1934, and spent six weeks in jail, until September 1941. From 1939-44 Darcy led the Party's work in Eastern Pennsylvania.

In 1927-28 and again in 1935-38 Darcy worked in Moscow for the Communist International, serving during his second trip as head of its Anglo-American secretariat, after attending the 7th congress of the CI as a delegate from the US. On both occasions Darcy met with Stalin.

Darcy is best known for being one of only two members of the National Committee (the other being William Z. Foster) who opposed Browder's dissolution of the CPUSA in 1944. While Foster agreed not to take the question to the Party membership, Darcy did not agree to this and was expelled from the CPUSA. Even though the Party was re-established the following year and Browder was removed from the Party leadership, Darcy was not invited to rejoin the party.

Darcy worked with other left-wingers who were expelled from or withdrew from the CPUSA in the first, unsuccessful, attempt to re-form a genuine Marxist-Leninist party in the USA. Even though this attempt was unsuccessful Darcy never gave up his principles.

This chapter is drawn from his unpublished memoirs, written in about 1940.

The Moscow Trials

It seems incredible that over ten years have already passed since the historic Moscow trials. How few of us understood them at that time! They were the first act in the democratic countries for tightening up the national unity to prepare to meet the accumulating strength of the Nazi monster which was to be hurled at a democratic world.

Suppose today, Moscow announced that they had caught a number of traitors who conspired with the Nazis and shot them. We would cheer lustily. Would we examine each detail of evidence haunted with doubt and skepticism and question whether the guilty were indeed guilty? We would not.

In the same way of thinking we did just the opposite over ten years ago when the Soviet Government did in fact arrest a number of pro-Nazi conspirators — only then we denounced the Soviet Government without bothering to examine even a single iota of evidence. Our country was filled with shouts of “fake”, “confession forced by torture”, etc. etc. The point is that justice had nothing to do with it. In all such cases the larger political relationships determined our attitude towards the specific case in question.

It is good that that change in our attitude towards the Soviet Union took place in these ten years for above all it has brought good to the USSR but above all it has brought good to ourselves and to the future of the world.

To most Americans the trials were remote affairs. To a few of us they carried a deep sense of personal shock. The Zinoviev-Kamenev trial occurred in January of 1935. Zinoviev and Kamenev and the group around them had been an opposition to the Soviet Government ever since 1927. They had on previous occasion been tried for shady activities and found guilty. Only then the circumstances were less strained and their punishment consisted of sending them to some more remote part of the country where they could not ply their factional disruption with the same effectiveness as they could when they were at the center of things in Moscow. When Sergei Kirov, one Stalin's brightest lieutenants was murdered in Chicago-gangster fashion in December 1934, we knew that the opposition had connived an act that was bound to boomerang against them with a powerful blast. And so when the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial occurred in January of 1935 and they were convicted and sentenced to ten and five years' imprisonment for their complicity, there was a sense of shock that they should have gone so far but the element of surprise was not there since we were already prepared by their many years of guilt and repentance and forgiveness and then repeated

commission of culpable acts and repentance and forgiveness. Of that first group that went to trial in January 1935, I only knew Kamenev. The rest I knew by their writings and their work. But Kamenev's sister had in 1927-28 lived in the room next door to us at the Lux Hotel, and Kamenev frequently visited her. He was a plumpish medium sized, solemn-looking man who wore glasses; and could have been taken for a neighborhood doctor.

At the time of his arrest Kamenev was found to have a considerable set of notes on the works of Machiavelli and Machiavellian lore. In fact, in 1934 Kamenev was head of the "Academia" publishing house in the Soviet Union to which he had been assigned when he was removed as punishment for his disruptive and oppositionist activities. While in that post he published Machiavelli's "The Prince" and wrote an introduction to it. He quoted Machiavelli as saying "There are two ways of contending (for political power), by law, and by force... because many times the first is insufficient, recourse must be had to the second..." This, Kamenev commented, shows Machiavelli to be a master of political aphorism and a brilliant dialectician." Kamenev further enlarges on this, calling Machiavelli "a dialectician who from his observations had formed the firm opinion that all conceptions of the criteria of good and evil, of the permissible and impermissible, of the lawful and criminal were relative..." If this were only a sub-conscious justification of his own criminal activities at that time the following almost constituted his program. For he wrote, "Machiavelli made his treatise into an astoundingly sharp and expressive catalogue of the rules by which the ruler of his time was to be guided in order to win power, to hold it, and victoriously to withstand any attacks upon it."

The will of the people, social forces or class relations seemed to play little part in Kamenev's thinking in the winning of power. He had to do that with a shallow Machiavellian justification of criminal activities.

Zinoviev who was associated with Kamenev in his activities was for some years head of the Communist International. Lenin had once published a book under their joint authorship. The killing of Kirov, the association of Zinoviev and Kamenev with such a despicable act as murder is should have awakened us to the depth of the forces which were manipulating those events. But absorbed as we were with the problems of our own countries we Americans and so far as I could tell, the delegates of other countries, took the December assassination and the January trial much too casually. As time went by and more and more of these ex-leaders of the Russian Communist Party and the Communist International were shown to be involved, none of us who were close to the scene failed to realize that this

was not some aberration of individuals but that we were merely at the heart of a great world drama. Of those who were tried later I knew fairly intimately Shatzkin, Lominadze, Bukharin, Radek and Fritz David. Some I found to have been very attractive persons, particularly Bukharin, an altogether charming and cultured person. Shatzkin who had been head of the Young Communist International for some years was a much younger man and though exceptionally gifted in many ways beloved to that category of young Communists (Lominadze, Doriot, Muenzenberg) whose heroism during the first world war made them the darlings of the world Communist movement and utterly spoiled then.

Radek I always found to be a more disagreeable person. He was forever surrounded by a group of admirers who enormously enjoyed his quips and cleverness. Yet while his conversation was full of that glittering brilliant phraseology which was characteristic of Trotsky, yet he never probed in a serious scientific way below the surface. The clever glittering phrase was more important to him than the unpolished sober kernel of truth. He was not an attractive person in appearance. He had thick-lensed glasses and wore his beard from temple to temple and under his chin. The chin itself and the rest of his face was clean-shaven. His tongue was sharp as a knife and he was always performing before whatever audience he could muster and in his gyrations he was not particular whom he cut up. Once, during one of these performances, before a group of six or eight, he was asked by one whether his transfer from the high post of being an assistant to the Foreign Office to his new post as head of the Chinese Eastern University didn't make him lose prestige with his students so that he would find it difficult to perform his new duties.

"The Chinks think I was promoted from Assistant to President".

The group laughed at this alleged wisdom and he strutted like the lone rooster in a henyard but I must confess I found the joke repulsive. It was typical of him.

One of the others who went to trial was Fritz David. David served at the same time that I was a member of the editorial board of the "Communist International" the official magazine published in some five languages by the Comintern. I found him a quarrelsome self-assertive self-opinionated and altogether disagreeable person.

The chairman of the board during my tenure was Klement Gottwald, the leader of the Czecho-slovak Communist Party. Gottwald was a very friendly and generous man with whom it was very difficult to quarrel even when some political disagreement arose, for Gottwald's democratic attitude to everyone was such that political disagreements could be freely expressed and he, unlike some petty mean individual never tried to crush

those who disagreed with him but rather sought common ground as a basis for unity. David conducted himself disrespectfully towards Gottwald and to all our annoyance was forever trying to deepen differences and in the time-honored phrases of the factionalists was always "sharpening" the point of view expressed and proclaimed that he must "show where comrade so-and-so's viewpoint led to". What anyone said was insufficient for him on the face of it. He was forever disrupting the meetings of the editorial board with disputations as to "what lies underneath", "what is implied", and "what are the overtones", of what one said. He was an excellent recruit for a Trotskyite opposition. Some might attribute his personal qualities to his oppositionist affiliations. There is no doubt some connection but I think the reverse is also true that he became an oppositionist because of his make-up. If ever I needed proof the following incident illustrates it.

David had once been a member of the German Communist Party. At the time of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern he was not a delegate to the Congress. Being only a "political worker" in the Comintern he was not entitled to an admission ticket to the Hall of Columns in the House of the Trade Unions where the Congress took place. He went to William Pieck, the fine old man who headed the German Communist delegation and with much pleading convinced him to intercede on his behalf to get him a ticket of admission. His eagerness to enter that convention it later turned out was not merely his interest in the Comintern; it was due to the fact that he had been commissioned by the Trotskyites to assassinate Stalin when Stalin appeared on the rostrum. He related subsequently how he entered the hall with a gun in his pocket and moved as far up the hall as he could and at the last moment concluded that he "could not get close enough for his aim to be effective". More than likely the overwhelming ovation that Stalin was given on his appearance on the platform took the heart out of this assassin. Most of those Trotskyite "heroes" were willing to plan assassinations for others to risk their skins in doing. But that David was willing to involve the old unblemished veteran Pieck in such a dirty business illustrates the utter unscrupulousness and lack of character of those people.

But how did such seemingly decent people as Bukharin and Shatzkin get mixed up with such stinkers as Radek, David and of course even more contemptible people whom I did not know personally?

When I arrived in July 1935 I found Moscow to be considerably different than when I left in 1926. This was not the easy going city it appeared to be on my first visit. Moscow was in a big hurry in 1935.

Most American cities are built in long straight or almost straight streets running in oblong or square blocks. Most European cities consist of a series of squares or circles which are as the hub of a wheel, the spokes being the

streets leading towards the hub. Moscow was built that way. Before the Revolution, however, at every hub where one would expect a nice open space, there were at least one, often two or three churches crowding the intersection and towering above all other buildings, so that all streets were reduced to narrow alleys and traffic was hazardous and in a constant tangle.

By 1935 these obstacles to a clean city had been removed. The city's cobblestones had, in most places, been replaced by modern paving. Streets were widened. Some new structures, a splendid hotel, several fine office buildings and a remarkably beautiful subway were built. Yet it was not those outward changes that struck one most forcibly.

It was the people. Everyone was hard at work trying to beat individual production "norms" and factory production quotas. The heroes of industry and farm production were the heroes of the day, their photos, decorations and awards graced the front pages of the biggest newspapers. There was not a beggar or a prostitute anywhere — they had all been transformed into useful production workers. The newspapers carried the scores on daily production achievements for key enterprises just as our papers carry baseball and football scores (although they had those too).

Once for the better part of a week I sat in a convention of beet farmworkers. About 1,000 participated. Also Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Zhdanov, Kaganovitch and others. It was quite a sight to watch Stalin and the farmers discuss the best way to pick beets, to plant them, to handle them, and to see some peasant girl point out to Stalin the error of this or that suggestion he made or to thank him for some help he gave them. To insist that some rest home space be allotted them, or to stand up and cheer when final agreement was reached in production quotas. I sat in similar conventions of the subway diggers, tractor workers, watched locksmith Olympiads and others. It was a inspiring demonstration of democracy in practice.

The country was covered with slogans along the same line: "The ability of people decides everything". "Improve your qualifications", "beat the quota". Applicants for Communist Party membership were rejected if they could not show that they acquired new skills in production in the two years preceding — unskilled worker to skilled, skilled worker to foreman, foreman to engineer, etc. Government, trade unions, cooperatives, political organizations, youth organizations were all running extra-school classes for acquiring skills. The maid who served our room at the hotel (18 years of age) had been an illiterate peasant two years before when she arrived in Moscow. She was already studying her high school subjects when we came. Her hours of work as a domestic ended at 4:00 p.m. She rushed off to her trade union classes and returned at 7 p.m. Then she sat in a corner of the

crowded community kitchen until after midnight doing her homework and studying. She was up at 6:30 for work. Before we left she was doing problems in trigonometry as part of the course she was then taking in aerodynamics.

The country was definitely going somewhere and it was in a big hurry to get there. This had been going on since 1929.

The last thing I took with me out of Moscow when I left at the end of 1928 was the issue of *Izvestia* in which Bukharin published his "Notes of an Economist" wherein he set forth the right wing thesis against the proposed first 5-year plan; in substance he asserted that the plan which was to undertake an ambitious program for the construction of heavy industry to the disadvantage of the supply of consumer goods was doomed to failure because it was too much for so backward a country.

The first five year plan was completed. The audit had not yet been announced, nor the dividends declared, but it was evident to the naked eye that it was pretty close to success. The cost to the people had been considerable. Obstacles thought insurmountable had to be overcome. Metal was needed for construction, but the supply was so pitifully inadequate they sent geologists to locate new sources. Materials and personnel for new construction projects had to be transported across vast spaces, and the transport system was congested and inadequate. Some of the new industrial giants were to be erected in what had been wilderness where even elementary housing, food and clothing was lacking. The shortage of any kind of skill was the worst problem. Slovenly methods of work and habits of life were still widespread hangovers from the Czarist regime. The working class had to grow from some 12 million to 29 million in five years. To accomplish this epoch-changing transformation, recruiting for industry had to be centered on a peasantry of fifty generations of farming background who did not take kindly to the skills demanded in precision work.

During this period the muscles and nerves of the people of the Soviet Union were stretched like a taut wire. The Bolsheviks lived only for their construction projects. They taught, spoke, argued and dreamed construction figures. Mobilized human will, persistence, purpose, and considerable sacrifice in the face of enormous hardship, was all directed toward the achievement of that first five year plan. During that period they slept badly, ate badly. Many of their best people were worn out and lost their lives in that straggle. Those were years of the most heroic and truly colossal industrial achievements the world has ever known. They undertook in five years what we in the United States with more favorably situated natural resources did in fifty.

Trotsky lived in Oslo, Norway at that time. He was a man of unrelieved ego. As his mass influence in the Soviet Union fell away he compensated for it by increasing insistence on his own greatness and by contrast on Stalin's "littleness". In Trotsky's lexicon Stalin shed the "dim glow" of a weak candle; he was a dull wit; he was pedestrian.

But Trotsky wasn't alone in this. There were many. Anyone who had stood within the circle of brilliant light shed by Lenin and was able to associate himself with his teachings and those of Marx, wore a lesser or greater mantle of greatness in the eyes of the masses. But some of these were really small people who lived entirely by reflecting Lenin's glow; they had little or none of their own. Yet the less they had, the greater their vanity. On these, Trotsky played an intriguing tune.

Many of those who became leading actors in the treasonable plots and conspiracies were Trotskyites, when Trotsky was fighting Lenin during the latter's life. Many had lost confidence in the new world being built. Many were newcomers to the movement who were flattered by the attentions they received, saw opportunist short cuts to prominence and power and were cajoled by the opposition to join them.

Typical of this was one Arnold who later participated in several criminal acts including one attempt to murder Molotov. During his trial he told how he first joined the Russian Orthodox Church in Czarist times, then during a stay in the United State he became a mason, then he joined the Lutherans, and on his return to Russia after the Revolution he joined the Trotskyites. In each instance he was asked for his motives and invariably he said that, he wanted to "mix in better society".

The leaders of the Trotskyite and Right Wing groups were already in a "better society". Some of them held leading posts in the government and industry. But they had once stood "equally" in the circle around Lenin and they watched Stalin's rise with invidious jaundiced eyes.

That base theme was ideal for the virtuoso Trotsky. Piatakov, one of the leading conspirators, later told how Trotsky played it. In many hours of discussion he had said to Piatakov:

Who is this giant that he stalks among you as if you were pygmies. You are small not because he is big. But because you accept being small. You have not cut the umbilical cord that ties you to his navel. Stand up like giants yourselves and see how Stalin will shrink. Half way measures are no good. Endless talk and discussion just proves you indecisive. Stalin must be removed physically. Then you can all rise to power. You must act like big men. Stalin must be destroyed now... etc... etc.

As I sat in the courtroom during the trial and heard Piatakov tell the story of Trotsky's working on him, it kept occurring to me that Piatakov could not have read Shakespeare.

For in his play Julius Caesar, that master of character unfolds these same base motives played on by Cassius who is ensnaring the willing (though piously protesting) Brutus into his murder cabal. Said Cassius:

"I was born as free as Caesar; So were you:
We both have fed as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he:
... this man
Is now become a god, and Cassius is
A wretched creature and must bend his body.
If Caesar but carelessly but nod on him.
... Ye gods, it doth amaze me
A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world
And bear the palm alone.

Why man, he doth bestride the narrow world,
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves.
Men at some times are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings,
Brutus and Caesar: what should be in the Caesar?
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?

Thus Trotsky won the petty connivers, one by one. Of course, they could not come to the people with their greed for personal power and avarice alone, – to that they confessed only as they stood in crushed defeat in the criminal dock – so Trotsky also gave them a program.

Socialist construction was really Stalinist Construction. It was destroying Russia's economy, not building it. Look how lacking the people are in consumer goods! By the end of 1934 there would be complete collapse and famine. As there can be no Socialism built in one country, so there can be no counter-revolution in one country. He then told them of his close agreement for "cooperation" with the German Nazis.

It seemed to work for a time. Times were hard in the Soviet Union during that first five-year plan. Not only plain people, but leaders, lost faith or never had faith in the path they had taken, and many fell away. And Trot

sky's agents and their German partners found ever-increasing circles of conspirators as allies; the Radek group and all its followers, the Bukharin group, the Tomsy group, the Shatzkin-Lominadse group, the remnants of the Zinoviev-Kamenev group, the Yagoda group, the Bukhachovsky group, one after the other they fell like worm-eaten rotting plums into the net of Trotskyite-Nazi conspiracy. Their numbers grew to tens of thousands and with it their confidence mounted to bolder, ever bolder deeds.

In July 1935, when I arrived in Moscow the first five-year plan was already completed but the rules governing its period of operation had not yet been lifted. The All-Soviet Planning Commission had not yet submitted its report to the All-Soviet Union Congress and the All-Soviet Congress had not yet decided how much of a dividend they could declare to the people. Everybody was still on rations. Goods bought on ration cards were at reasonable prices but anyone who wanted to buy above rations could do so at government stores but had to pay very high prices. People had lots of money, for wages were high and few indeed were those who did not earn above the minimums. But there were not enough commodities to buy with those wages. And so while money was plentiful among the people they were still wearing clothes which were bought one or more years previously; household furnishings were sparse and the supply of food limited. The Trotskyites were spreading rumors all over the country that the availability of money was meaningless since the money itself would soon lose all its value. It was widespread; even I as a foreigner, heard it expressed in my moving about the city. The delay in improving conditions after the conclusion of the first five-year plan seemed to confirm the Trotskyite prognostications of economic disaster for the country. For "if we successfully completed the five-year plan why are there no benefits from it?"

In September of 1936 the conspirators received their first blow. The Government announced that the results of the first five-year plan were sufficiently clear so that even without the All-Soviet Union Congress meeting certain improvements could be made immediately. Some things especially bread, vegetables and certain other food stuffs, were released from rationing. Prices in all stores were cut an average of 40% at one blow. And many stores which had previously been limited to serving those who wanted to buy on ration cards were declared to be "open stores," that is serving everyone and selling above the maximum allowed on the ration cards.

Soon thereafter I began to realize that something was happening for the Moscow papers began publishing letters received from anonymous readers which said in effect:

We have become involved in some anti-Soviet activities.

We realize we are wrong. If we voluntarily report our crime to the government will we be punished? Where do we go to report?

This was a curious phenomenon. At first only a few such letters were published and each day more and more until hundreds of them had been published.

On New Year's another big blow was handed the conspirators. All rationing throughout the country was abolished and prices were lowered another 40 percent.

When the rationing was first lifted in September scenes in the Gastronoms – Moscow's huge grocery stores – and the department stores and other merchandising establishments were like Macy's basement on an exceptionally big bargain day. People stood on line waiting to buy, with huge wads of chervonetz's (notes of ten rubles each or over) in their hands, or in shoe-boxes. The buying was hectic, frantic and indiscriminate. The gossip running throughout the buying was that this was just a flash in the pan and that after a day or two the supplies would be exhausted and that they would go back to rations. Each wanted to buy for all the rubles they had before the stores closed again. But the distribution apparatus was well prepared and as fast as the shelves were emptied they were refilled with new stocks. For the first two days the panic continued unabated. The third day however it began to taper off and after a week it was quite normal and all the shelves were full of merchandise and new stores were being opened up. When the second cut in prices and the complete abolition of rationing was announced on the first of the year, it did not even cause a ripple. Buying did not noticeably change. This was indicative of the profound change that came over that considerable section of the population which had some doubts, whom the hardships of the first five-year plan had given some doubts and disillusion. While all this was visible to the naked eye, in the prosecutor's office, government officials were piecing together the story of plot and counter-plot, conspiracy and counter-conspiracy and unfolding the picture of the vast network of all the various anti-Soviet groups that had been secretly formed who were carrying on illegal activities of a most reprehensible sort.

At first only simple people came, workers who told of how they had been approached to slow up production in the factories or to do their work badly or to make faulty instruments. Through them, some were picked up who told of groups that had been formed for purposes of organizing sabotage.

The procedure under Soviet justice is much slower than ours. Before a man can be indicted there are considerable hearings by the prosecution authorities at which evidence is taken and the law examined. Only after the prosecution and police authorities have assembled a complete legal case is the accused indicted for the crime and brought into the court for trial. This delayed matters so that it was not until August of 1936 that the first of the trials occurred.

The story of the trials is known to the world and the court stenograms are in most American public libraries. In its political aspects the trial showed that not only had the German Nazis corrupted and made part of their espionage machine considerable numbers of French, British, American and traitorous elements of other countries, but also in the Soviet Union and on a scale that far exceeded anything that we could imagine. The people in their pay reached from simple miners who got a few extra rubles for their trouble to steal dynamite or to turn off a ventilation system at the wrong time to people in such high places as Piatakoff who was Assistant Commissar of Heavy industry, a position of such great power that it gave him control of all the vast basic industries of the country, mining, steel, railroad, and so on.

In its original aspects the extent of their atrocities staggered the imagination. They wrecked trains loaded with Red Army men, killing scores; they callously hid dynamite in children's playgrounds so that blew up, killing many. They caused 1500 wrecks on railroads by such tricks as sending out locomotives with faulty pressure gauges so that the locomotive and the engineers were blown to bits. While people were short of consumers' commodities in the cities they routed freight cars loaded with goods to a railroad siding so that over 50 million dollars' worth of goods rotted. They organized holdups of banks and they made attempts on the lives of Party leaders some of which, as in the case of Kirov and some lesser known persons were successful and many of which, as in the case of the attempt on Molotov's life and Stalin's life were unsuccessful^

I doubt whether there will ever be erased from my mind the memory of the scene during the Radek-Piatakoff trial when about a score of workers from the Kamerova Mine explosions came to Moscow, some with legs shot off, some with arms gone, some blind, all crippled in one way or another, demanding seats at the trial so that they might confront the defendants with the results of their callous criminality. Soviet justice which abhors "scenes" and organizes everything so that procedure should be smooth and quiet, denied them admission and for two whole days these victims picketed the courtroom.

The callousness of some of the defendants was almost beyond belief. Kamenev, who so "cleverly" said that "heads are peculiar in that they do not grow on again" as an argument for the assassination of Stalin. Or Radek who, while telling of the development of their policy and changes of tactics from time to time, explained that they found that "killing individuals was child's play; when so much was at stake it was necessary to go over to mass murder in order to create a panic in the country". And as this most distasteful man finished saying such a monstrous thing he paused for dramatic effect, squeezing the lemon into the tea which court attendants provided witnesses so that they might refresh themselves and looked over his audience to see if he created the effect that a man of such "objective greatness" should create. These petty souls satisfied their egos by distributing portfolios for the new government they planned to set up with the overthrow of the Soviet Government, many of them strutting into the courtroom with the grotesque burlesque of serious statesmen.

As day after day of each of the trials went by, probably more shocking than anything else was the unfolding of the story of how they entered the employ of the Nazi government. Radek telling of his deals with members of the Nazi Embassy in Moscow and boastfully explaining how he had refused to deal with lesser Nazi government officials and insisted upon negotiating with the most important of them.

Even while testifying from the prisoner's dock the ego of many of the defendants kept intruding into the dreadful story that was unfolding. Radek, Piatakov, Sokolnikov and others kept asserting that he was the one and not the others who succeeded in initiating the contacts with this or that Nazi big-shot. Or that he was the one who first made this or that analysis. etc. etc. It was gruesome. N. Lurye told how he had received Franz Weitz, who came as the representative of Himmler who at that time was the leader of the SS, the Nazi Black Shirt guards. Piatakov told how the Nazi Government provided him with a special plane to make a visit to Trotsky in Oslo, etc. etc.

Some of those who played a leading part in the conspiracy either could not stand the humiliation of having become Nazi agents or the humiliation of going through a trial, and committed suicide. These included Lominadze and Tomsky.

In their hate induced by the jealousy that was consuming them the plotters did not only betray their own country, the Soviet Union; they had even joined the axis conspiracy against the rest of the world, that should they come to power in the Soviet Union they would cede the Amur Region and Maritime Province to Japan and guarantee a supply of oil to Japan for their war against the United States.

Ambassador William C. Bullitt was then carrying on a campaign with the same objective as the Trotskyites. In 1935 Bullitt visited the office of our forthright Ambassador Dodd who then served in the Berlin Embassy. In his Diary, Dodd, the loyal patriotic American that was until his death, expresses amazement at Bullitt's advocacy of the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and the ceding of territory to Japan. Dodd says: "Bullitt said Russia had no business trying to hold the peninsula which projects into the sea at Vladivostok... I was amazed at this kind of talk. The President met know the man's mentality, but if so how could he have appointed him Ambassador to Soviet Russia".

As I watched the contemptible and broken men who sat in the prisoner's dock in these trials I tried to explain what prompted their confessions. Vishinsky, the prosecutor, of course brought out that they had fought against telling their stories until they were confronted with such overwhelming evidence provided by others that it was useless to continue denying, and that they would appear in court in an even worse light if they simply denied that which could not any longer be denied. But it also occurred to me that they were in such a hopeless tangle of intrigue they could only find their way out by confessing. They knew that the consequence would be death. After the first Zinoviev-Kamenev trial which ended in sentences of death, none of the defendants could have had the illusion that they could escape. Yet consequences aren't everything to a human being. Sometimes the desire to escape from the gnawing torture, the criminal knowledge of one's own guilt, is so overbearing, that whatever the consequences one must make one's peace with one's own conscience.

The audience at the trial was made up by the issuance of a limited number of admission cards to various institutions in Moscow. The courtroom was about twice as big as the average American courtroom; it held about 400 people. Some of those seats were allotted to the diplomatic corps, some to the trade unions, to representatives of the largest factories, some to the Russian press, to the foreign press, etc. etc. The Communist International received about a half dozen tickets, some of which were for permanent observers and some were rotated amongst others. I was fortunate enough to be one of the permanent observers.

One day, towards the end of the trial, I had just returned to my office in the Comintern building when Dimitrov telephoned to ask me to come to his office. I found both Dimitrov and Manuilsky together. They asked me for my impressions of what had happened and I told them. I was under considerable tension produced by the shock after shock as the filthy story of treason and baseness and criminality were revealed in the courtroom. And no doubt my emotional reactions governed my conduct more than I

realized. Turning to Manuilsky, whom I had learned to love and respect dearly, I said (I realized only later, with considerable passion) "where were the loyal Soviet followers during all these years? We always boasted about the greatness of the Russian Communists who are ever alert against the enemy and the vigilant activities of the Soviet Union's GPU. How is it that for over four years, maybe longer, those people were able to build up such a vast network of criminal activities and organization and not be detected? I could understand if it were merely a secret propaganda organization but not this! Isn't this evidence that something has gone wrong with the leadership of the Soviet Union, that you have really become soft and too comfortable in the seats of power?"

Manuilsky answered with a humility for which I will never forgive myself: "We never believed they would go so far. We thought it would remain a matter of internal political differences. We gave them, as you can see, leading posts in the government, in industry and in scientific and cultural organizations. We wanted to assure them that differences of opinion alone were not sufficient to condemn them. And that they were welcome to participate in Soviet life. What kind of country would we have if one part of the government, even the leading part, spied on other parts?"

Manuilsky's soft answer brought me to, somewhat. I was looking for some way to apologize for my outburst when I suddenly noticed Dimitrov who was glaring at me with a fierceness which bespoke his quite justified anger at my having let myself go. I was still standing awkwardly looking for a way to leave the room so as to organize my thinking somewhat when Manuilsky said "You were quite right to say what you did, Comrade Darcy". I left the room with an even greater appreciation of the man than I had ever had before.

There are those in or near the Communist movement who believe that holders of Communist Party membership cards and especially leaders of the Communist movement are so inspired by ideals as to be above baseness and low motive. The whole history of the fight for liberation of the people is flooded with episodes of leaders, especially leaders, who become opportunist, self-seeking and corrupt. In intense historic moments such as revolutions or war, people's emotions go far deeper than normally. Human beings rise to the greatest heroic heights and sometimes sink to the lowest acts. It is only so that we can understand the revolt against Caesar's legions twenty centuries ago; the times produced Jesus but also a Judas. It is so that we can understand how our own American revolution which produced Tom Paine and Thomas Jefferson could also produce Benedict Arnold. Or how the French revolution which could produce a Marat could also produce a Fouché. Or how the struggle to liberate the slaves could produce John

Brown but also a Supreme Court which wrote a Dred Scott Decision. Finally, why it is that precisely in times of war is when Marxian revolutionary movements have always met their severest test, when so many in some countries have risen to such magnificent heights of heroism and achievement while others have sunk to base opportunism and treason. That these years of 1929-35 witnessed such extremes as the treason of the Trotskyites and the heroism of the rest of the people was evidence of the fact that we were approaching the supreme test of humanity, the war to stop Nazism and to insure that if the world is to move at all it is not to move back to feudalism but forward to a better and more democratic life.

The trials woke up the peoples of the Soviet Union. As the American newspapers reporting the trials started coming in to my office the realization grew on me that there was an utter lack of comprehension of the significance of the trials. Newspapers writers and columnists kept telling about the increasing tension in the Soviet Union brought on by the trials. Everywhere I went, in the factories, political, cultural and educational institutions, etc. I could see the exact reverse. The tension grew amongst those who held high posts and were seriously involved in the conspiracies but amongst the people the exact reverse was true. The solution to all of the "accidents in industry", the explosions and the maiming and the killing and the exposure of the facts concerning the treasonable organization was like the lancing of an abscess which gnawed at their vitals. The country heaved a sigh of relief and set about the job of cleansing themselves of the social aliens in their midst and girding themselves for a new march forward to strengthen their country.

Yet severe as they were with those associated with the conspirators it was a severity tempered with such justice as could provide an example to the rest of the world. Even while I was reading in the American newspapers coming to the Soviet Union about the "war on the opposition", I was witness to an incident of such humane understanding. There was a lady of about 35 years of age who worked in the Comintern as a librarian. Her husband had been one of those convicted in connection with the trial of the Zinoviev-Kamenev group in January 1935. Apparently he had not actually committed any murderous or other serious crimes of violence and his association with them was of a lesser culpability. His sentence was six months of labor at one of the White Sea Canal projects. His wife was not removed from her post to the Comintern which certainly would have been her minimum punishment in an equivalent position in our country, but what was even worse, to violation of regulations covering such cases she stole important information material out of the Comintern and out of Soviet institutions and smuggled them to him. This was soon discovered. She was

arrested for that and sentenced to four months imprisonment. She realized her error and said so in court. The court taking into consideration the marital relationship was very lenient considering the seriousness of the offense. When she was released from prison, in consideration of the fact that she understood her fault, her old job as librarian in the Comintern was restored to her. However months passed and no one else in the Comintern would have anything to do with her. Some even refused to talk to her. She was completely isolated. One day at one of the periodic general meetings of the Comintern staff, Manuilsky took the platform and for fifteen minutes gave the staff a tongue lash for their uncomradely, unsocial attitude towards this lady such as was unparalleled in my experience.

On thinking back to how political dissidents in our country are treated, the great mercy which tempers justice in the Soviet Union was brought home to me and the utter meanness of those American journalists who were condemning the Soviet attitude towards political offenders as "ruthless" also became underlined.

But with this there was increasing alertness. In December of 1936 the Russian Communist Party was to hold its annual election of officers. Until then nominations and elections to Party posts had always been openly made. By this practice such members as might dislike some powerful office-holder often felt limited in expressing their opposition for fear of reprisal. The Central Committee decided to put its entire leadership to the test as to whether they were really acceptable to the membership. Those who were performing a useful public service in their office would likely be reelected and those who were simply holding on to a sinecure and a place of power would be hard put to hold on to their posts. For this they introduced the secret ballot.

The results were surprising. In some districts of the Party the whole leaderships were swept out of office. In others there was severe criticism leveled against the leadership by a good-sized opposition vote although on the whole, the national leadership of the Party received a resounding endorsement. The Party felt greatly refreshed by the new people elected to office and the elimination of those who had become hardened bureaucrats and were no longer welcome to the rank and file.

The fight against bureaucracy had, ever since the establishment of the Soviet government, been one of the chief self-imposed tasks of the more responsible Soviet leaders. Nepotism, favoritism and factional group practices had bred an unhealthy situation where, whenever one man got a post of responsibility in some industry or office, he could immediately bring in as his assistants all those whom he for one or another reason favored and gave them the most desirable posts under him. Often those

people were not qualified and even where they were qualified the feeling of having a protector caused them to become slothful and bureaucratic. Besides which, the tendency was for each such key person to increase the staffs under him beyond the needs of the enterprise in which he was engaged both because he wanted to "take care of" all his friends as well as because he felt the larger the staff under his control the greater his influence.

The problem finally became serious enough for the Government to take measures which they did beginning in 1935. On one occasion it was discovered that there was a grave shortage of harvest hands. As against that it was estimated that there were at least 25,000 workers in Moscow offices who were not absolutely necessary to the continued functioning of the economy of the country. After an educational campaign each government trust was simply given a quota of office workers it would have to surrender to agricultural work. And with proper selection, 25,000 office workers were transferred from Moscow to places of production.

Walking between the Comintern and the Lux Hotel where we lived I frequently saw an office building which seemed to have thousands of workers employed there. It is the common practice in Moscow to put a snail plaque at the entrance of every business building indicating what office, plant, or other enterprise operated therein. Curiosity made me look several times to identify the building without success. One day walking here with a Soviet official I asked him which building it was.

You see that telegraph pole on the corner? he asked. Some years after we took power some hooligans kept tearing the telephone wires down. In order to prevent that a soldier was stationed there to guard it. By some misfortune that soldier was a bookkeeper in civilian life. As he marched up and down in front of the pole it occurred to him that various interested persons might have inquiries concerning that pole and wouldn't know whether to write.

He therefore applied to a proper government office and obtained permission and facilities to send out 75 letters to various institutions informing them Ivan Ivanovich Podemkin is in charge of that pole and all inquiries concerning it should be directed towards him.

Bureaucracy was than already beginning to creep around our ears and many offices were occupied by people with little or nothing to do, Consequently when they received the letter concerning this telegraph pole each not only sent a reply on his

own but to give it the proper flair they "referred it for further consideration" to other offices. In short, Ivan Ivanovich Podemkin received over 200 replies. This was now a serious matter.

He promptly applied for one, a secretary to direct the handling of the correspondence; two, a typist to write them; three, a file clerk; and four, an office manager to organize his staff, acquire a place for it, etc. Under Soviet practice every four employees were entitled to an uborchitsa, that is a person to keep the place clean, to serve them tea at ten o'clock and so forth. That made five. Having five people they needed someone to buy their office equipment, represent them in their pro Soviet Bureaus to get them appropriation of funds, and so they got this additional person making it six. Now, having six people they surely needed a person to be their trade union organizer who has the responsibility for caring for their social welfare funds, vacations, family needs, etc. That made seven, having seven people they couldn't permit their political education to be neglected so they got a full time Party organizer who also taught them political science. Now it soon developed that the Party organizer, the trade union secretary and other representatives to the government developed a vast correspondence of their own with all sorts of important corresponding bureaus in the district, city and federal government and so they needed secretaries, stenographers, bookkeepers, etc.

In short, said my friend, you see that building? It has three thousand workers in it. They are all terribly busy. The guard at the telegraph pole has long since died and so no one but the archivist who keeps track of such matters knows the origin of that organization but when the budget comes up, you try to get the appropriation for that staff cut by as much as one ruble and there is a grand hue and cry that they cannot possibly perform their very important function with a smaller staff.

The story was no doubt largely invention but it revealed the state of mind of responsible Soviet officials towards the jungle of bureaucracy that had crept around their ears and indicative of their determination to keep cutting it down.

The battle to keep the nation on its toes against the creeping paralysis which the opposition on one hand deliberately tried to introduce and bureaucracy by its very existence tended to bring about was waged with particular severity in the popular elections to the All-Soviet Union

Congress which followed the adoption of the new Soviet Constitution in December of 1935.

Watching that election close at hand it struck me as being curious that in all the discussions of Soviet Democracy and its comparison to democratic practices in other countries one rarely got a picture of how the channels of democratic expression of the people operated in their new electoral process.

Looking at it from 3,000 miles away it appeared as if there was one electoral ticket and the people were given the chance to vote "yes or no" on it. This was indeed true of Nazi elections but it is completely a false picture when applied to the Soviet Union.

To start with, in the Soviet Union politics and elections are not the special duties of a political party. If one does not understand that paramount fact everything else is likely to be unclear. Nominations to public office are not made by a political party alone. The Communist Party does indeed put forward many candidates but so do the trade unions nominate independent candidates for political office; so do the cooperatives, the cultural organizations, the scientific academies, the youth organizations, whatever special women's organizations exist and every other organization or institution that desires to. In short, nominations for office, which in our country stems only from political parties, in the Soviet Union stems from every possible people's organization.

The second thing that must be understood about Soviet elections which give them their special democratic quality is that the emphasis in the selection of candidates does not lie in the final vote but lies in the choosing of the nominees.

I had the privilege of observing the nominations and elections in the district in which I lived and worked from beginning to end. The particular election which I referred to was the All-Union election for selection of delegates to the All-Soviet Union Congress, that being the equivalent of our choosing of members of the United States House of Representatives in Washington. Each institution in the Congressional district in which I resided and worked held meetings of the people to nominate candidates. Meetings were held in factories. The Moscow University, which was in this district, held a meeting. The great Lenin Library held a meeting of its staff to put forward candidates. So did all of the cooperative stores associations that operated there. So did the trade union organizations, the Communist Party, the youth organizations, etc. etc. A great many candidates were put forward in each meeting. The procedure for each candidate was to stand up and give a brief biography of his life and reasons why he should or should not be nominated. It was considered a lack of civic responsibility for a

candidate to decline out of hand. If he thought he should not be elected it was his duty to take the platform, provide a brief biography of his life, and give the reasons why he should not be accepted. Two whole weeks were set aside for this procedure. Some organizations met every night for the entire period and examined thousands of people who were put forward as candidates there. Each candidate had to submit to questions from the floor. At the end of that time one or two nominees were put in nomination for the entire district with the endorsement of the body choosing him or her. In addition to putting forth nominees each group chose a number of delegates on a proportional representation basis to a congressional district conference. The congressional district conference also met for a period of about two weeks. The nominations were put before that body. The same procedure was gone through there, each nominee was examined, his or her qualifications weighed against other nominees and finally a vote taken by the delegated body for the final choice.

Frequently the body decided to accept not one nominee but two or three or even more. These nominees, after this thorough process of distillation were then submitted to the electorate for final voting. And the electorate thus, by popular majority, judged one of the candidates in that congressional district they desired to have represent them in the All-Union Soviet Congress.

From this it can be seen that far from lacking in democracy this process is a very democratic one in that it gives the common people a very direct hand in who is nominated and we know from our own electoral system that in the last analysis the selection of the nominee is the critical thing in any election.

In the election which I witnessed I saw nominees "put through the mill" in a manner which would be very wholesome if applied to our own country. Their contributions and social service, their own interest in public affairs, their record of unselfish service, their own schooling and education and the degree to which they took advantage of self-improvement and social betterment were all gone into. Men of bad personal and moral conduct who offered themselves as candidates had their neighbors, friends and fellow workers who knew them well, discuss them right on the floor. It was in some respects our New England Town Meeting used on a colossal national scale covering an election in which 170 million people were involved. It is this process which provides the incentive for social service and social striving and interest in the public welfare by people throughout their country. In that election, for example, about half of the previous members of the All-Soviet Congress were not reelected. Many a smug big-wig including numerous Communists were surprised at the end of that election

campaign to find themselves unwanted and many a person who was not even a member of the Communist Party who had given no thought to politics but who had served the public well out of sheer devotion to the people in their own professions or occupations or in some volunteer organization found themselves members of the highest governing body, the new Congress of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. It is a new type of democracy and I would say it serves them very well.

Every generation must be vigilant concerning its own liberties. No people can guarantee the liberties of succeeding generations, liberties won can be lost again. Therefore mere mechanical electoral organization is of itself no guarantee for all time that the liberties of the people will be assured, but insofar as any political structure can be so set up as to be most responsive to the moods and the needs of the people, I would say that the Soviet Union has made great strides forward in that direction.

But even the Soviet Union, as we were constantly reminded, was not an isolated entity living in a vacuum – it was part of the real world. West Europe and Asia were seething with the first battles of the Second World War. There were things to do to help the embattled Spanish people, the underground movement in the Nazi dominated countries, the promotion of People's Front movements against the Nazis in the democratic countries and the growing anti-Japanese forces in China.

My primary interest was of course the United States. But the United States also does not live as an isolated entity in a vacuum and the future of our country was in no small measure being decided in Europe and in Asia. Like thousands of other Americans I decided to lend a hand where I could be useful. I was fortunate in being able to make almost a free choice.