

Letters to the Editor
MOSCOW TRIALS

TRUTH BEHIND THE
"CONFESSIONS"

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—Much astonishment has been expressed in the confessions of the defendants in the latest Moscow trial. Most commentators find it incredible that the same men who founded the Soviet régime should have intrigued for a war and prepared the defeat of their country in such a war in order to wrest power from Stalin in the turmoil resulting from defeat.

As a student of Soviet Russian affairs, the present writer remembers very well most of the former Moscow wreckers' cases, the absurd blunders committed by the defendants in their confessions. In the "Industrial Party" trial the chief culprit, Professor Ramzin, gave an account of his negotiations in Paris in 1928 with the well-known pre-War Russian industrialist, Riabushinsky. It turned out that Riabushinsky had died several years before the year mentioned by Ramzin, so that Ramzin had negotiated with a dead man. And that was not all; another party to the same negotiations was found to have been dead for five years.

As there have been many blunders of the same type in other Moscow trials the present writer is strongly tempted to dismiss also the confessions of the latest Moscow trial as "frame-ups." But those who have followed these trials on the spot more closely say that there is always a core of truth, and damaging truth at that. In the two last Moscow trials that seems to have especially been the case. There really seems to have been a vast conspiracy against Stalin—namely, a conspiracy of the old Bolsheviks against a usurper who has been handling them rather roughly during the last 10 years. They have been systematically pushed into the background, they have been deported to Siberia and have been allowed to return to Moscow only after humiliating recantations. Every now and then they have had to eat humble pie, and some two years ago even their organizations were ruthlessly dispersed. Revolutionary merit has entirely lost its glamour and prestige, and a new generation has taken their place, who know little, if anything, of the October Revolution.

Can one think of anything more galling to men like Trotsky, who made the October Revolution and defended it successfully in the Intervention Wars; to Zinovieff, who for years was the head of the Communist International and the powerful satrap of Leningrad; to Kamenef, who together with Stalin and Zinovieff ruled Russia for a couple of years after Lenin's death (so-called "Troika"); to Serebriakoff, who was one of the three secretaries of the Politbureau, the highest organ of the Soviet régime; to Piatakov, the industrializer of Russia; to Sokolnikoff, the creator of the present Soviet currency; to Radek, who was an important man during the Polish War in 1920 and during the abyss of German misery in 1923, when he was tantalized by the vision of a Soviet Germany with himself as its dictator?

If we visualize to ourselves the wretchedness of the life of most of those fallen angels during the last 10 years, is it so improbable that they should have been inflamed with an insensate lust for revenge and seizure of power?

Many may be ready to admit this, but find the means confessed by the defendants incredible. They cannot believe that they should have intrigued for a war against their own country and for the defeat of their country in such a war. This scepticism is quite natural, but it overlooks the fact that Vladimir Ilich Ulianoff-Lenin preached during the Great War defeatism of the same type, enjoining to the Russian proletarians that it was not enough to wish the defeat of their own country; on the contrary they had to work for the defeat of their own country with a view to availing themselves of the difficulties of their Government and their bourgeoisie to overthrow the latter. In an article which has been reprinted in a collection entitled "Against the Current" in 1918 Lenin expressly said: "It is impossible to attain this end without wishing the defeat of one's own Government and without working for such a defeat."

Now, of course, it can be said that the Bolsheviks at that time were dealing with the reactionary Tsarist Government, whose overthrow everybody ardently desired. But was it a Tsarist Government against whom Lenin's defeatism was applied in all its hideous unscrupulousness in the summer of 1917? Was it not at first a Liberal Government, and later

enough in their defeatism to consent readily to the cession of all that was wanted by Germany. So ready was Lenin that he was prepared to retreat as far as Kamchatka, provided power could be retained in that remnant of the Russian territory. Trotsky tells that when he, Trotsky, had remarked to Lenin: "But what then if the Germans came on—marched on Moscow?" he received the answer:—

We shall retreat further east, protesting our readiness to sign a peace treaty. The Kuznetsk Basin is rich in coal, we shall set up a Uralo-Kuznetsky Republic. . . . If needs be, we shall go further east beyond the Urals, we shall go as far as Kamchatka, but we shall not yield.

And Trotsky adds that this was not a joke; on the contrary, "in that period a Uralo-Kuznetsky Republic occupied a big position in Lenin's argumentation."

Of course, Lenin was gambling on the chance of regaining later all that was to be ceded so wantonly, and the same chance may have been at the back of the minds of Radek and his fellow conspirators—according to one reporter of the trial Radek actually made a statement to that effect. If that was the case, in their recent schemes for the "dismemberment of the Soviet Union" Radek and his fellow conspirators were only good Leninists. They only intended to apply the same defeatism by which Lenin and his associates disintegrated the fighting forces of democratic Russia in 1917 to Stalin's dictatorship.

I am, &c.,

JUHO TIMONEN.

62, Witley Court, Woburn Place, W.C.1.

FACTORIES IN RURAL
AREAS

THE CALEDONIAN POWER
SCHEME

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—The decision of the Government in regard to the proposed aeroplane factory at Maidenhead, and the strong views expressed on that proposal by members of all parties in Parliament and by such powerful organs of public opinion as *The Times* and other leading newspapers, encourage those of us in the Highlands who are fighting a similar and in many ways a much more indefensible proposal in Inverness-shire to demand that that proposal should also receive its quietus forthwith from the Government.

I refer to the Caledonian Power Scheme, which is seeking to obtain Parliamentary powers to devastate 300 square miles of one of the loveliest regions in the Highlands, and to rob a much larger, and that the most populous and most prosperous, region in the whole Highlands for all time of 15 per cent. of its water, in order that a factory for the manufacture of calcium carbide may be established in another part of the Highlands, far removed from the Special Areas and wholly unindustrialized. From the point of view of the claims of the Special Areas and of the inadvisability, to use no stronger word, of planting such a factory in a rural area, the case is precisely the same as the case which led to the abandonment of the Maidenhead proposal, and for that reason, if for no other, the Government, if it is consistent, should at once notify the promoters of the Caledonian Power Provisional Order that it will not be permitted to go through. If the Government takes this step it will not only strike another resounding blow for the cause of the Special Areas, but it will earn the gratitude of the 27,000 inhabitants of an area embracing nearly 800 square miles of the Highlands who are at present spending much time, money, and energy in opposing a scheme which seeks to transfer to another area great water resources which are vital to the health, prosperity, and amenity of the area to which those resources belong.

It is claimed that the factory when completed will employ from 300 to 200 men, which means that a new industrial town will be created in an unindustrialized area. But even if such a new creation were desirable it ceases to be desirable when, as in the present case, it can only be accomplished by destroying the existing means of livelihood of many people in another Highland area, the area of nearly 800 square miles already referred to, and by jeopardizing the existing means of livelihood of very many more. Moreover, the only alternative it will offer to those whom it will drive from the glens in which they now live, and to those throughout the whole area of nearly 800 square miles whose existing means of livelihood it will destroy, is the possibility, the very remote possibility, of their finding employment as hewers of wood and drawers of water in a factory. For in such a factory, of course, skilled labour will have to be employed to a very large extent, and that skilled labour can only come from the industrial areas, for it does not exist in the Highlands. Thus the depopulation of the rural Highlands will be increased, and the only compensation will be a new industrial centre in which some Highlanders may find employment—if that is any compensation for the loss which the rural life of the Highlands will suffer.

Surely, Sir, the Prime Minister must have forgotten the existence of the Caledonian Power Provisional Order when, in reply to Mr. Lawson, he assured the House of Commons on January 26 that a case similar to that of the proposed aeroplane factory at Maidenhead was not likely to arise in the near future. Seeing that it has arisen what is the Government going to do about it?

Yours, &c.,

EVAN M. BARRON.

The Courier Office, Inverness.

REGISTER OF ARCHITECTS

LANGUAGE OF THE
DEAF

EXPRESSION BY SIGNS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—May I be allowed to express wholehearted support for Mr. William Wood's plea (in your issue of February) that the natural sign language of deaf should never be "condemned suppressed"?

Sign language is the only natural universal language of mankind; it moreover, the origin of all spoken language, for, as Darwin pointed out, man's mouth tends to imitate the movements of his hands. The gestures articulation by which speech is produced are thus derived from pre-existing hand gestures.

Instead of suppressing the natural instincts of the deaf to express themselves by signs, it would be rational, and more useful, to educate all normal children throughout the world to use sign language. Then they would not only be able to communicate with the deaf, but also a "hearing" people of all nationalities. The world badly needs a universal auxiliary language; sign language, systematically developed, would provide an easy and natural way of supplying need.

There is nothing that can be spoken in ordinary speech which cannot be expressed equally well in sign language, and the "language" can, as I have shown, be learnt in much less time than is required for memorizing the vocabulary of any foreign language.

The phenomenon of human speech never be properly understood till it is studied in conjunction with that of language.

Yours faithfully,

R. A. S. PAGE

1, Devonshire Terrace, Lancaster G.W.2.

EMPIRE AIR BASE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—Through a misconception of position (which is generally not understood) Admiral Kennedy in *to-day's Times* attacks not only me but virtue the very ratepayers' pockets he so desires to defend. The Portsmouth Corporation which he hopes "will stick to its opinion," did not, as he imagines, reject both schemes, but only the one less costly to maintain, in spite of its being considerably safer, and this because it requires £167,100 less on immediate outlay. I repeat that by so doing the council is assessing the safety of the public at something less than that amount.

Again, the Admiral inaccurately implies that the Air Ministry approached the Corporation and "asked" it to put up rates. It was, of course, the Corporation which decided (Council's Minutes, p. 1, September 4, 1936) to "take immediate action to confer with the Air Ministry Imperial Airways, &c." His argument nothing less than that the Government should have paid the whole cost of building the Queen Mary on the Clyde instead of contributing an assisting subsidy. Moreover, the Admiral ignores the fact that in the recent Maybury Report on "Development of Civil Aviation" we reaffirm the Government's policy in case of aerodromes:—

All these activities stimulate traffic in which aerodromes can derive revenue. We do not, therefore, recommend any subsidy to civil aerodromes (p. 31)—a somewhat sweeping generalization but by no means an "unjust and ill-idea," as Admiral Kennedy asserts.

It is true that some air bases over sea are unavoidably tidal, but where facilities exist equal if not superior to those of Friedrichshafen or of L. Garda are these not to be made available to the chief air base of the British Empire in the form of a constant water-level secured by a barrage? A few days ago the young pilot of a flying-boat was killed at Singapore when it crashed in shallow water. The Admiral's condemnation of the barrage scheme is unacceptable unless he offers a reasoned case as have eminent British engineers of great experience in this special work. One of these schemes is confidently recommended to the country by a firm of unsurpassed standing as likely to show a handsome return and at the same time a clear profit instead of liability, the whole scheme. As well as solving the problem of the air base the scheme facilitates road construction much desired, and by harnessing tidal energy in circumstances so favourable that they are able to be unique, would provide electricity at competitive rates, and incidentally opportunity to Havling residents of St.

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Now, of course, it can be said that the Bolsheviks at that time were dealing with the reactionary Tsarist Government, whose overthrow everybody ardently desired. But was it a Tsarist Government against whom Lenin's defeatism was applied in all its hideous unscrupulousness in the summer of 1917? Was it not at first a Liberal Government, and later in the summer a semi-Socialist Government headed by Kerensky? And yet the Bolsheviks were unscrupulous enough to do everything to abet and egg on the disintegration of the Russian fighting forces even during the Kerensky period. Those who have read the innumerable reminiscences by the Bolsheviks about their exploits during that period know how they exult in their success in disintegrating the Russian Army to the core. The writer of this has quite recently read the reminiscences of Bonch-Bruевич, an old Bolshevik, Lenin's Maccenas, in whose home Lenin often lived during the period under question, even during the "October Days," and who printed Lenin's paper for soldiers. Of this paper Bonch-Bruевич says that it was able to disintegrate the Imperial Army to the core, forgetting that at the time under question there was no Imperial Army, only an army commanded by Kerensky, himself a semi-Socialist, not to speak of his many Socialist colleagues.

I want to emphasize this point as strongly as possible, because all those who connive at the treacherous activities of the Bolsheviks in 1917 always forget that it was against a very democratic Government, a semi-Socialist Government, that those activities were directed.

If the Bolsheviks were unscrupulous enough to work for the defeat of their country during the Kerensky period, even when Russia was governed by a semi-Socialist Government, why should they shrink from it now that Russia is governed by an autocrat beside whom Nicolai II would cut a very poor figure, not to speak at all of Kerensky and his colleagues?

When the Bolsheviks finally came to power they had to reap the fruits of their unscrupulousness at Brest-Litovsk. Among other things, they had to cede the Ukraine. Trotsky had qualms, tried to save the situation by his slogan: "We wage no war, we sign no peace!" while Radek and other Left Bolsheviks clamoured for a "revolutionary war." Only Lenin and a few others, Stalin and Sokolnikoff among them, were consistent

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Surely, Sir, the Prime Minister must have forgotten the existence of the Caledonian Power Provisional Order when, in reply to Mr. Lawson, he assured the House of Commons on January 26 that a case similar to that of the proposed aeroplane factory at Maidenhead was not likely to arise in the near future. Seeing that it has arisen what is the Government going to do about it?

Yours, &c.,
EVAN M. BARRON.
The Courier Office, Inverness.

REGISTER OF ARCHITECTS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—The letter on the Register of Architects in *The Times* on February 5 calls for a reply from the unnamed "dissentient association." Although we note that the signatories admit that the dissentients are prepared to support the principle of the Bill on conditions, those conditions should have been stated, but the signatories are no doubt aware that, had this been done, the ground would have been cut from under their feet and the hopelessness of the whole proposal revealed.

As a member of the Registration Council since its establishment in 1932 I can affirm that that body, on which the signatories' organizations are represented, has long since recognized that the principal Act is a bad measure, its provisions being both ambiguous and inequitable. Some time ago the Registration Council unanimously passed a resolution in the following terms:—

"That in view of the several ambiguities in the Act likely to embarrass the Architects' Registration Council and its Committees in the proper and equitable administration of the Act, this Council do now take action to draft and secure, as soon as possible, such amendments to the Act as may be necessary."

Thereafter an Amending Act Committee was set up to draft amendments, and the writer with others put in hours of hard work on drafting suitable amendments. Without waiting for the report of the Amending Act Committee a section of the Council is endeavouring to rush through an Amending Bill which does nothing to correct the undesirable ambiguities. I may add that the decision of the Registration Council to proceed thus prematurely was by no means unanimous, the voting being 17 to nine.

The irregularities of the whole business have prompted the Incorporated Association of Architects and Surveyors to protest against such ill-conceived legislation. There is ample evidence that the flood of literature in its favour emanates from the offices of the Royal Institute of British Architects and not from those of the Registration Council. The chairman of the Registration Council is a member of the R.I.B.A. I have suggested to him, and he has not denied it, that the Bill is being promoted by the R.I.B.A. in its own interests with the intention ultimately of creating a monopolistic control of the profession. The matter will continue to be contested by us in the interests of the public and the profession.

Yours faithfully,
G. B. J. ATHOE (Registered Architect),
Secretary.
The Incorporated Association of Architects
and Surveyors, 43, Grosvenor Place,
Westminster, S.W.1.

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I am, &c.,
EDWARD MOUSLEY.
53A, Pall Mall, Feb. 4.

WALKING FOR HEALTH

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—I am wholeheartedly in support of every effort the Government is willing to make towards inculcating the realization that physical fitness promotes a healthy mind and human happiness. The simplest remedies are often the most despised. Let the Government's first move be to encourage in every way cheaper and better transport facilities which would make it economically possible for all classes, individuals, families, and clubs to get out into the country at the week-ends, and there to walk along footpaths and by-roads for at least two or three hours. The "cheap" day tickets on the railways are not nearly cheap enough, the country buses, Green Lines, &c., are still beyond the reach of a working class family.

All the year I tramp in the country, even on Saturday or Sunday, and it grieves me to see so few of my fellows taking Nature's own medicine in its simplest and most effective form. If the whole nation could be persuaded to walk more, the standard of mental and physical fitness would rise beyond all our hopes. A family of four, living in the heart of London, has to be comfortably off to afford 10s. a week for a trip into the country, yet throughout the winter, and even in the summer, country trains and buses are infrequent and empty.

Instruct our people, also, to read maps. We have the best in the world, and perhaps the cheapest, but our Ordnance sheets are still too dear to be bought by the masses. Walking is regaining some of its pre-War popularity, but with the fullest possible encouragement from the Government, the nation could make, literally, great strides towards fitness.

Yours truly,
JOHN ROBERTS.
5, West Hill, Sanderstead.

Very heavy pressure compels us to ask correspondents to write as concisely as possible. Letters intended for publication should be typed or written on one side only of the paper.