

BOOK REVIEW

The Case of Leon Trotsky

Report of Hearings on the Charges Made against Him in the Moscow Trials

BY LEON TROTSKY

Reviewed by: Louis Barron, Editor, "Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations"

In April 1937, in Coyoacán, Mexico, an impartial commission headed by the American philosopher John Dewey conducted hearings into the charges made against Leon Trotsky at the Moscow "purge trials" of 1936-37.

United States courtroom procedure was followed during the 13 sessions that took place over a seven-day period. After direct examination by his lawyer, Albert Goldman of Chicago, Trotsky was cross-examined by the five commissioners—John Dewey, Suzanne LaFollette, Carleton Beals, Otto Ruehle, and Benjamin Stolberg—and by their lawyer, John Finerty. "By the end," wrote Isaac Deutscher, "no question had been left unanswered, no important issue blurred, no serious historic event unilluminated."

Trotsky testified in English, a language in which his vocabulary was limited and his grammar was shaky; nevertheless, as Deutscher pointed out, "The incisiveness of Trotsky's logic got the better of his unwieldy sentences, and the clarity of his ideas shone through all his verbal blunderings. . . . Above all, the integrity of his case allowed him to overcome all external restraint and constraint. He stood where he stood like truth itself, unkempt and unadorned, unarmoured and unshielded yet magnificent and invincible."

This remarkable document—first published in 1937—should be in every library.