

BOOKS OF THE TIMES

By RALPH THOMPSON

NOW, having at last learned to pay due and respectful attention to the Webbs, Durantys, Fischers, *ci-devant* Chamberlins and other champions, and to discount as ignorant most bourgeois criticism, we must orient our opinions on Soviet Russia anew. For there are not merely two approaches to the subject; there are at least three. The third is indicated in an important and devastating study by Leon Trotsky, written before the recent trials and executions and published today by Doubleday Doran in Max Eastman's translation: "The Revolution Betrayed" (\$2.50).

"Betrayal" is a strong word, yet for Mr. Trotsky's case it is the only one. Stalinism, he feels, has done no less than betray the Bolshevik party, Marx, Lenin, the October revolution and the international working class.

Indictment

The Union's economic growth is, because of the bureaucracy's cynical "manipulation of statistics and public opinion," not only less rapid than it ought to be but even less rapid than it appears to be.

In his eagerness to increase the productivity of labor, Stalin has introduced Stakhanovism and thus applied "the classic methods of exploitation * * * in such naked and crude forms as would not be permitted even by reformist trade unions in bourgeois countries."

Instead of dwindling away to allow true socialism and communism, the bureaucracy has developed "into an uncontrolled force dominating the masses," and the Red army "has given birth to a privileged officers' caste, crowned with marshals."

The Russian revolution, indeed, has turned to reaction. Thermidor has been reached.

The old Bolshevik party is dead: "The overwhelming majority of the older generation of the present bureaucracy had stood on the other side of the barricades during the October revolution. * * * Or at best they had stood aside from the struggle. Those of the present bureaucrats who were in the Bolshevik camp in the October days played in the majority of cases no considerable rôle. * * * Of the Politburo of Lenin's epoch there now remains only Stalin. * * * The prisons, the remote corners of Siberia and Central Asia, the fast-multiplying concentration camps, contain the flower of the Bolshevik party, the most sturdy and true."

The bureaucracy lives on the fat of the land, complaining that "not all the houses newly constructed for them possess 'rooms for houseworkers'—that is, for domestic servants." At solemn sessions in the Kremlin, the "leaders" and People's Commissars "address in the second person singular [in token of superiority] directors of collective farms, shop foremen and working women." Officers and bureaucrats enjoy motor cars, fine food, expensive theatres, luxurious subways, parlor cars, special trains and steamers.

The masses, meanwhile, are lucky if they get enough to eat. Members of collective farms "live as formerly in the old huts with their calves and cockroaches." The "overwhelming majority of the workers huddle in common dwellings, which in equipment and upkeep are considerably worse than barracks." Bureaucrats exploit the peasants "in the character of semilegal landlords." "When the new Constitution announces that in the Soviet Union 'abolition of the exploitation of man by man' has been attained, it is not telling the truth. The new social differentiation has created conditions for the revival of the exploitation of man in its most barbarous

form—that of buying him into slavery for personal service."

"In scope of inequality in the payment of labor, the Soviet Union has not only caught up to, but far surpassed the capitalist countries."

"The forty million Soviet families remain in their overwhelming majority nests of medievalism, female slavery and hysteria, daily humiliation of children, feminine and childish superstition." This despite Lenin's efforts to destroy that "archaic, stuffy and stagnant institution" known as the family. Prostitutes stalk the streets as in Czarist days. Abortion, that "most important civil, political and cultural right" of woman, has once more been forbidden.

Education is a farce. All questions students might ask, "including their very own, are decided for them. Theirs only to carry out the decision and sing the glory of those who made it." Culture is likewise farcical, for the bureaucracy issues "anonymous directive editorials, having the character of military orders, in architecture, literature, dramatic art, the ballet, to say nothing of philosophy, natural science and history. * * * About Soviet economy, or domestic or foreign policy, one cannot write at all except after covering his rear and flanks with banalities from the speeches of the 'leader,' and having assumed in advance the task of demonstrating that everything is going exactly as it should go and even better. * * * Marxists who might say something valuable and independent are sitting in prison, or forced into silence. * * * Even the explanatory notes to the complete works of Lenin are radically worked over in every new edition from the point of view of the personal interests of the ruling staff."

In foreign policy the Soviet bureaucracy has brought nothing but "misfortunes to the workers' movement of the world," and chosen to tag after capitalism, imperialism and "all kinds of pacifist illusions." Yet without simultaneous foreign revolutions the vaunted Red army would, in the event of war, "inevitably" suffer defeat.

The new Constitution "merely refers the elector from Pontius to Pilate" and represents "an immense step back from Socialist to bourgeois principles."

New Revolution

These are the high spots in Mr. Trotsky's passionate and methodical indictment. What is necessary, he feels, is a new revolution—one which will seek not to change the economic foundations of Soviet society but to abolish bureaucratic absolutism, restore democracy and the right of free speech within party circles, abolish rank and privilege, re-direct foreign policy toward revolutionary internationalism and, of course, permit the repatriation of Leon Trotsky and his followers. When this revolution will take place Mr. Trotsky does not try to predict.

"It is not a question," says the author, "of substituting one ruling clique for another, but of changing the very methods of administering the economy and guiding the culture of the country." Of this no careful reader of Mr. Trotsky's analysis can have a doubt. But all readers must ask themselves whether Trotskyism in practice would not be a quite different sort of thing from Trotskyism on paper—whether, indeed, in important respects it would not bear a marked resemblance to Stalinism at its "worst." The two isms stem from an identical source, the difference between them being that one has developed in a man's mind, the other in the hard soil of reality.

PUBLISHED TODAY

**LEON
TROTSKY'S**



scathing charges against the Soviet regime are fully revealed for the first time in this history-making document. No thoughtful reader who would understand one of the great factors in world affairs can afford to ignore-

**THE REVOLUTION
BETRAYED**

WHAT IS THE SOVIET UNION AND WHERE IS IT GOING?

Translated by Max Eastman
Price \$2.50 *Doubleday, Doran*