

Soviet Purge Sweeps All Strata of Life

Starting With High Army Officers and Chiefs of State, Stalin's Housecleaning Now Is Involving Even Humble Cooks and Nurses, and Russian People Are Becoming Inured to Arrests

Harold Denny, Moscow correspondent of the New York Times, is on leave in Paris, where he is writing a series of seven articles for the Times and The Globe and Mail, telling of conditions in Russia. He will deal particularly with the great purge of the army and officialdom, which has startled and puzzled the outside world. The first article of the series follows:

(By HAROLD DENNY.) •

(Special by Wireless to the New York Times and The Globe and Mail.)

Paris, Sept. 15.—Dramatic and bewildering is the twelvemonth in the history of the Soviet Union that has just drawn to a close. It has been a year of considerable positive accomplishment, despite recessions in many key industries and disorganization of much of the Soviet economic and political machinery. But most of all it has been a bloody year, the bloodiest since the early years of the Bolshevik revolution.

It has been a year of startling contrasts. Early on the morning of Aug. 24, 1936, sixteen men, including the world-famous old Bolshevik leaders, Gregory Zinovieff and Leo Kameneff, were convicted of plotting to assassinate the present Soviet leaders, from Joseph Stalin down, to seize power and betray the country to capitalism. They were led stumbling out forthwith to be shot.

On Dec. 5, 1936, the last Congress of Soviets tumultuously adopted Stalin's new Constitution, advertised by Soviet spokesmen as the most liberal and most democratic in the history of mankind.

Then, in March of this year, Stalin in a speech before the central committee of the Communist Party demanded genuine democracy within the party, and at the same time in a little-noted part of his speech he called for cleansing the country of all disloyal elements, which, though not realized then, was the signal for the wave of executions, imprisonments, dismissals and degradations that are continuing unabated to this day. The twelvemonth just concluded also brings the Soviet regime close to its twentieth birthday, for on Nov. 7 the country will elaborately celebrate the seizure of power by a little group of determined men, high among whose councils were leaders who now are dead at the hands of their one-time comrades or in jail awaiting whatever inglorious fate.

Thus now is an appropriate time to review the situation and weigh the possible reasons for this drastic and continuing purge. These possible reasons are beginning to

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emerge from obscurity. They are still regrettably vague and incapable of concrete proof in a land where the simplest affair is often veiled in semi-Oriental mystery, where in treason cases all but the "show trials" are held behind closed doors and their evidence not revealed, and where foreigners are now objects of suspicion, cut off to a large degree from personal contacts and compelled to live their lives in Moscow beyond an invisible pale.

Yet we have the Soviet press, which in recent months has been filled with amazingly frank information; we have eyes to see with and ears to hear with, and so, though much information is denied us, much filters through, and we do get the feel of things.

The Hunt Goes On.

The dead of the past twelve months—those names actually announced in the limited number of provincial newspapers reaching our Moscow desks—number many hundreds and the toll is increasing almost daily. The hunt for "spies, wreckers and diversionists" is now dredging into the humbler strata of the population.

Whereas a year ago the Soviet ers of names famous in bolshevism authorities were shooting the bear and less than three months ago the greatest generals the Red Army had developed were executed, now the Government has got down to shooting cooks as terrorists because they put rotten meat in officials' stew, and women attendants in a nursery for poisoning children's foods for counter-revolutionary purposes.

In between the one-time leaders of a world revolution and the restaurant help lie those hundreds of big and little men shot for varying crimes, ranging from wrecking trains at the behest of foreign spies to abusing the peasantry and disrupting agriculture in order to discredit the Soviet regime and lay the basis for a return to capitalism.

Untold thousands more have been arrested in every part of the Soviet Union, one deduces from reading between the lines of the Soviet press, for arrests are rarely announced in so many words. Innumerable others have been dismissed from their jobs under circumstances that will militate against their getting desirable jobs again. And those expelled from the Communist Party in recent months are legion.

Fields Hit By the Purge.

The Soviet purge is affecting almost every conceivable field of life. Those which have already felt it include:

1. Old Bolsheviks, men who helped to make the revolution but fell out with Stalin on doctrinal issues or came to be regarded as politically untrustworthy, so that they were either accused of counter-revolution or shelved.

2. The Red Army, eight of whose greatest generals, headed by Marshal Mikhail N. Tukachevsky, were executed last June on the amazing charges of selling military secrets to Germany.

3. The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), which has taken the place and functions of the old OGPU. Its higher ranks, from Henry G. Yagoda, the commissar, down, have been combed, and since the downfall of the sinister figure of Yagoda last fall hundreds of its higher officials are reliably reported to have followed him to prison—a feature of the purge that apparently is popular with Moscow's general public.

4. The Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, a number of whose highest officials, including Nikolai Krestinsky and Leo M. Karakhan, assistant commissars, and three members of the Press Bureau, which includes censorship, disappeared under circumstances suggesting their arrest.

5. The governing organs and Communist party leadership of constituent republics, notably White Russia, Georgia and the Ukraine, where there have been mass arrests and dismissals, together with suicides and executions.

6. The Communist party, from members close to the seats of power in Moscow to local officials in remote Provinces.

7. The Young Communist League—charged with the vitally important task of educating Soviet youth in loyalty to the Stalin regime—many of whose leaders have been removed, some under the ominous accusation of being "enemies of the people."

Reserve Corps Is Winnowed.

8. Osoaviakhim, organization containing millions of members devoted to training army reserves, whose former chief, General Robert P. Eideman, was one of the gen-

erals executed with Marshal Tukachevsky.

9. —Local agricultural administrations, from regional officials to chairmen of collective farms and agronomists, a number of whom have been shot recently for alleged anti-State activities.

10. Industries of all sorts, resulting in a general shifting of commissariats as well as numerous dismissals.

11. —Railway transport, which alone has provided hundreds of firing squads with victims, especially in the Far East.

12. The State Planning Commission, which is the brain of this vast State-controlled economic organism.

13. Foreigners. There has been a general, though by no means complete, "liquidation" of foreigners in Russia. It started with citizens and former citizens of potentially hostile countries, such as Germany, Japan and Poland, and has spread to citizens of other countries with which the Soviet Union has no quarrel.

Most foreigners who had retained their foreign citizenship were simply asked to leave the country. Many foreign radicals, however, who had entered Russia and taken Soviet citizenship were arrested. The most notable of these was Bela Kun, one-time leader of the short-lived Soviet regime in Hungary. More than a hundred Hungarians he induced to take refuge in Russia are reliably reported to be under arrest.

Communist International Hit.

Even the Communist International staff is reported to have been heavily raided and many of its German members put in jail. And now a young Englishman has been arrested in Leningrad on charges of espionage.

There has been a general clearing out of American and other foreign engineers. Some American engineers of high ability are still employed, however, in airplane manufacturing, radio installation and ice-cream making, in which the Soviet Union still desires foreign technical aid. These report they are receiving every courtesy.

Even this long list is incomplete. Inroads have been made into the fields of education, journalism, literature and drama, though apparently not on a mass scale. The editor of the Komsomolskaya (Young Communist) Pravda was among those denounced as "enemies." Another Soviet writer who has disappeared is accused of spreading Nazi propaganda, because in articles and books on Germany, on which he was an authority, he quoted from Adolf Hitler too fully.

The Political Director of the famous Moscow Art Theatre was brusquely removed, as were the Director of the Mali Theatre and Natalie Sachs, internationally known Director of the Children's Theatre. Even the Park of Culture and Rest has not been spared, a woman director and lesser executive having been removed, if not arrested.

No General Breakdown Near.

So extensive a purge in so many fields would seem to indicate a general breakdown. But the significant thing is that it has not occurred and there is no reason now to believe it will occur. True, many industries are seriously lagging, but ridden as they are with fantastic inefficiency, most of them are functioning fairly well by previous standards in the Soviet Union, and there is no reason to believe the country will not struggle through.

In any judgment of Russia one must bear in mind that the country itself is enormously large and enormously rich, with every essential raw material and adequate food supplies. It must be remembered also that the Russian people have enormous powers of resistance. They can "take it," else they would never have survived the frightful years through which they have passed.

One would think, too, that the waves of arrests, in which so many are losing relatives or friends, would stir up dangerous resentment. Worry is apparent in Moscow, but, strangely enough, the tension when I left Moscow a few days ago seemed less than it was immediately following the Tukachevsky execution.

The people have become used to it. Their sensibilities have been dulled, and, I think, there is a certain fatalism in their attitude. Arrests are commonplace in Russia. The Russians have always been subject to political persecution, and being garretted is certainly no disgrace. The Russians appear to accept it with amazing equanimity.

Recently a simple artisan was arrested as he went with a card of introduction from one foreigner to another to do a job of manual work. He was turned over to the Secret Police, who, believing him an important spy, threw him in a cell with some intellectuals, similarly suspected. After two days and nights he was turned loose.

An American would have been hopping mad at such treatment, but not this Russky (Russian). He was very cheery at the fact that he had got out at all and flattered at being enabled to associate with cultured company for the first time in his life.