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## **The Trial of the Social Revolutionaries**

### **Kursky's Reply to Vandervelde & Co.**

Moscow, June 8, 1922.

The reply of Comrade Kursky, People's Commissar for Justice, to the protest note signed by Vandervelde, Liebknecht and Rosenfeld is as follows:

Citizens! Your protest against the conditions in which you find yourselves in Russia are from beginning to end untenable.

Firstly, in the present trial you are not simply defending attorneys but appear as leaders of the governing political parties of those countries in which the citizens of Soviet Russia are either not at all admitted or in only a very limited degree. Citizen Vandervelde is first and foremost a former Minister of Justice of the Royal Belgian Government, a representative of the government circles of a country which belonged to the most reactionary group in the war against our country at the time when Citizen Vandervelde was a member of the Government as well as during the Genoa negotiations. The policy of Belgian government circles towards Russia was and is a policy of hatred, intervention, blockade and piratical demands. All this causes in a proud people a certain bitter feeling against the chief leader of official Belgiums as well as against those defenders less well known in Russia who are making common cause with him, especially in the matter of this last protest.

Secondly, the complaint concerning the agitation in the Soviet press of a semi-official nature is not in place. It must not be forgotten that in Russia there exists no freedom of the press in the bourgeois sense. That means that no freedom of the press in the bourgeois sense. That means that we deny capitalists, bankers, and millionaires the opportunity of publishing "independent" papers for the poisoning of the people's mind either directly or indirectly through their agents. All the more completely, however, does our press reflect the actual interests and feelings of the workers. One of these feelings is hatred of the foreign capitalists who desire to expose our country to death by starvation and of all those who indirectly or directly support them in this endeavour. The Government is of the opinion that there is absolutely no ground for curtailing the freedom of our press to express these comprehensible and just emotions.

Thirdly, our Government considers it necessary to take the necessary steps to insure your personal security and to give you the fullest opportunity to fulfil your court functions. Under the above-mentioned conditions this can only be done by placing you under the protection of tried workers who will fulfil their mission despite their emotions. You yourselves acknowledge in your note that they show tact and amiability in their work. Can you demand more of them?

Fourthly, you complain of certain superfluous measures in the organization of this protection. But we do not doubt that the least incident provoked by any accomplices of the prisoners, by you or by other White Guards would be the

starting point for a new wave of agitation and of active violence against your persons, threats against your life, etc., and that in this agitation your party press would as usual take the lead.

Fifthly, you complain of difficulties in communication with authorities who have nothing to do with the process, and especially emphasize the fact that Citizen Vandervelde has not been able to meet the British representative in Moscow. We again point out that Citizen Vandervelde is not only an attorney for the defense in the S. R. trial, but is also in fact the representative of one of the Governments most hostile to us. We have no reason to place any faith in the intentions of this government and in the political actions of Citizen Vandervelde. In view of the entire past there can be no doubt of the hostility of the views and intentions of Citizen Vandervelde toward the Russian Workers' and Peasants' Republic. Therefore we must take all necessary steps for ensuring the interests of the revolution without, however, violating your freedom as defending attorney in any respect.

Sixthly, the Commissariat for Justice has repeatedly decreed that only such steps should be taken as the necessity of your personal security demand or the interests of the Republic require.

Seventhly, The Soviet Government reserves the right to expose to the European working class that you, instead of expressly and loyally acknowledging that the Soviet Government assures you the fullest opportunity to fulfil your legal tasks while your governments would not for a moment consider admitting Soviet defending attorneys to the trials of Belgian or German rebels or Communists, sign a groundless protest which can only be considered as the continuation and development of your political battle against the Russian Revolution, now surrounded by world imperialism.

(signed) *Kursky*  
People's Commissar for Justice.

### **The First Day of the Trial**

The following telegram is a condensed report of the proceedings of the first day of the trial.

Moscow, June 9, 1922.

One June 8th, the trial of the S. R.'s began before the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal.

The accused are divided into two main groups. The first group comprises the members of the Central Committee of the Social Revolutionary Party who issued the orders for assassination and instructions for insurrections. Their names are as follows:—

Artemyev, Nikolai Ivanovitch  
Donskoi, Dmitri Dmitrievitch  
Feodorovitch, Florian Florianovitch  
Gendelman-Grabovsky, Mikhail Jakovlevitch  
Gerstein, Lev Jakovlevitch  
Gotz, Abram Rafailovitch  
Ivanov, Nikolai Nikolaievitch

Lichatch, Mikhail Alexandrovitch  
 Morosov, Sergei Vladimirovitch  
 Rakov, Dmitri Feodorovitch  
 Ratner-Elkind, Yevgenia Moissayevna  
 Ratner, Grigory Moissayevitch  
 Timofyeyev, Yevgeny Mikhailovitch  
 Vedenyapin, Mikhail Alexandrovitch

They are being defended by Vandervelde, Rosenfeld, Liebknecht, Moutet, Wauters and several Russian lawyers such as Muravyev and Tager.

The second group, comprising the members of the S. R. Party who carried out the assassinations and later resigned from the party when they had become convinced of the faultiness of the party's policy are being represented by the following Russian comrades: Bukharin, Tomsky, Katanyan, Ovsyannikov, Snamensky, Tchlenov, Sorin, Bitzenko, Veger and Stukov; by the French comrade Sadoul; the Italian comrade Gramsci; and the veteran of Polish Socialism, Felix Kon. The names of the accused in the second group are as follows:—

Agapov, Vladimir Vladimirovitch  
 Allovsky, Arkady Ivanovitch  
 Dashyevsky, Yosif Samoilovitch  
 Fyedorov-Koslov, Filip Fyedorovitch  
 Gorkov-Dobrolyubov, Grigory Lavrentyevitch  
 Ivanova-Iranova Yelena Alexandrovna  
 Konopleva, Lydia Vassilyevna  
 Liberov, Alexander Vassilyevitch  
 Lvov, Mikhail Ivanovitch  
 Moratchyevsky, Yuri Vitallyevitch  
 Pelevin, Pavel Nikolaevitch  
 Semenov, Grigory Ivanovitch  
 Slobin, Pavel Vladimirovitch  
 Stavskaya, Fanny Yefremovna  
 Subkov, Fyedor Vassilyevitch  
 Usov, Constantin Andreyevitch  
 Utgof-Djerushinsky, Vladimir Lvovitch  
 Yefimov, Fyedor Timofyevitch

Lunatcharsky, Krylenko and Pokrovsky are the public prosecutors. Clara Zetkin, Alois Muna, and Bokanyi, the Hungarian Commissar recently released from the dungeons of Horthy-Hungary, are participating in the prosecution as representatives of the Communist International.

The accused Right Social Revolutionaries declared that the Court was partial because it consisted of Communists and raised an objection. They were supported by Vandervelde who represented the Belgian bourgeois courts as impartial as opposed to the Russian revolutionary tribunals. The Tribunal overruled all the objections and its chairman, Piatakov, declared:—

“The Socialists always fought the lie of the impartial court. In the bourgeois states the court is the organ of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. In Soviet Russia it defends the interests of the working masses, but that will not prevent the Tribunal from objectively investigating the guilt of all the accused.”

Thereupon the bourgeois defending attorneys, Vandervelde and Rosenfeld, demanded the admission of a number of Mensheviks as defending attorneys which was denied by the Tribunal because the Central Committee of the Mensheviks had openly declared in a letter that it was sending its representatives to the trial in order to employ it as a political tribune. They based their demand on the Berlin agreement of the Executives. Radek declared on the witness stand that the agreement had been violated by the Second International.

## The Second Day's Proceedings Reading the Indictment

Moscow, June 9th, 1922.

In the evening session on June 8th, the Supreme Tribunal disposed of several requests of the prosecution and the defense concerning the subpoena of various witnesses. The testimony of Frossard and Smeral was declared advisable since they are able to furnish information upon the connections of the S. R.'s with the Entente in the battle against the Russian Revolution. Lunatcharsky requested that Professor Klioutchnikov, who was a member of the Koltchak White Government, be subpoenaed to give testimony on the activities of the S. R.'s in Siberia. The requests of the defense for the subpoena of several witnesses were complied with. The only requests denied were those for the subpoena of witnesses who were otherwise incriminated or had proved themselves unworthy of belief during their examination previous

to the trial. During the session the Social Revolutionaries attempted to compel the fulfilment of all their demands by threatening to withdraw from the courtroom.

In the morning session on June 9th, in accordance with the trial calendar adopted in the evening session on the 8th, the reading of the indictment was begun. The S. R.'s began to obstruct the proceedings which appeared to render the continuation of the session impossible. The defenders requested a pause, after which the S. R.'s and their defending attorneys recognized that their withdrawal from the courtroom would merely demonstrate their inability to disprove the charges in the indictment. Rosenfeld declared in their name that they had decided to remain at the trial. Thereupon the reading of the indictment was recommenced which took up the remainder of the day's session.

## The Moscow Press on the Trial

Moscow, June 9, 1922.

A leading article in the *Pravda* considers Vandervelde's attack against the group of the accused S. R.'s who have gone over to the camp of the revolution as dictated by hatred of those fighting workers who in the past had been in prison for years and now have turned from their counter-revolutionary leaders. “Not these Social Revolutionaries are the traitors but those who during the world war went over to the camp of the bourgeoisie”.

The leading article in the *Izvestia* assumes that the Second International intended a political challenge from the very beginning. Vandervelde, who formerly maintained that he was merely acting as a defending attorney has “declared in the name of one million, workers” that justice in bourgeois Belgium functions better than in Soviet Russia. In the name of the revolutionary defending attorneys Bukharin replied that they gladly accept this challenge to a political battle. All the workers of Russia and the entire world proletariat will view this battle with interest.

## The Trial before the Moscow Soviet

In the Plenary Session of the Moscow Soviet Radek reported on the trial of the Social Revolutionaries and dealt in detail with the true role of the attorneys of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals. The Left Social Revolutionary Steinberg took part in the discussion. He was of the opinion that it was no longer necessary to unmask the counter-revolutionary activities of the Right Social Revolutionaries. In the resolution adopted the Moscow workers express their confidence that proletarian justice will throw light on the crimes of the S. R.'s against the Russian workers' and Peasants' Revolution and the labor movement of the whole world.

## The Third Day.

Moscow, June 10th, 1922.

The proceedings on the 10th of June were opened with a declaration of Timofyeyev, one of the accused and a member of the Central Committee of the Social Revolutionary Party, dealing with number of questions only distantly connected with the trial. The president of the tribunal repeatedly called Timofyeyev to order. The accused declared that it was his duty to explain the motives for those deeds justifiably charged to the Social Revolutionaries. Timofyeyev stated that the Social Revolutionary party had been carrying on the struggle with the Soviet Power since the October overthrow for the defense of the government forms of the February Revolution. The alleged deeds are entirely incontestable. He did not agree with the view that the S. R.'s had commenced the civil war. They had at first decided to carry on a political struggle exclusively and they only commenced the armed fight after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. Timofyeyev declared that the Social Revolutionary Party did not realize at the time that Europe after the war could not return to pre-war conditions. The S. R.'s did not, however, overestimate the strength of the Russian Revolution and the Russian proletariat and therefore did not desire to assume too difficult a task. Timofyeyev did not dispute the statement that the S. R.'s had maintained connections with the Entente. He himself had carried on negotiations with Charles Dumas and Ehrlich. At the same time, however, the S. R.'s were opponents of intervention in the internal affairs of Russia (sic!). After the German Revolution the S. R.'s realized the necessity of a change in their tactics but a favorable opportunity and the necessary will power were lacking. “The fact that we had lost influenced our further actions.”

After the collapse of the Samara Committee of the Constituent Assembly under pressure from the Right and the Left, the Social

Revolutionary Party decided to commence a regrouping of its forces. The decisions of the Eighth Party Convention laid down the necessity of the utilization of those front trench soldiers now in the rural districts for the "fight" against German imperialism. They therefore proclaimed the peasant insurrection. Timofyeyev disputed the active participation of the S. R. Party in the uprisings in Tambov and Kronstadt and declared that the "S. R.'s, extraordinary as it might sound, supported the Soviet Constitution (!)" The audience laughed when Timofyeyev declared that the S. R. Party would carry on a struggle against the new economic policy which contradicted the Soviet Constitution. Timofyeyev concluded by saying that the S. R.'s were not satisfied with the Socialism being developed by the Soviet Government and that they were adherents of the *old* Socialism.

In a temperamental statement Grigory Ratner, also one of the accused, replied to the chaotic and evasive speech of Timofyeyev. "We have committed many crimes," declared Ratner, "but we cannot be accused of hypocrisy and beating about the bush. As far as this latter was concerned, we carried out the directions of our chief party leaders very poorly. One can respect one's opponents, but respect disappears after so hypocritical a speech as that of critical a speech as that of Timofyeyev. The political policy of the Party was always concealed and kept secret by our leaders." Ratner asked how they would reply to the question concerning the attitude of the leaders of the S. R.'s towards those who had actually assassinated, pillaged and robbed. One of the accused called out, "We were convinced that we were following the instructions of the Party". Ratner replied, "Who are we, common criminals or political contestants? The leaders of the Social Revolutionary Party preferred not to go into details, simply to leave the executors of their orders in the lurch and to brand them as common criminals. That was the consequence of continuous hypocrisy of the Central Committee of the S. R. That became especially clear to me after my trip through Denikin's domain where I was able to convince myself that all the talk about a fight against two fronts was merely talk." Ratner pointed out a number of facts which illustrated the actions of the responsible leaders of the S. R.'s under Denikin's rule. He then read a number of clippings from the Social Revolutionary press which recommended Denikin's army as a thoroughly democratic one and called upon the adherents of the Social Revolutionary Party to collaborate with the Denikin government. Another article pointed out that the differences with the monarchists and the Cadets hindered the fight against the Bolsheviks. Ratner declared that a large group of Party members remained in Denikin's domain and not only carried on no struggle against the monarchists but openly supported Denikin and the Volunteer Army. The Central Committee knew all of these facts. Up to the present there is no case on record of a members of the Social Revolutionary Party being excluded because of his cooperation with Denikin. "There was no third power," exclaimed Ratner, "there was also no fight against two fronts. For one group this slogan was a self-deception, and for the other a conscious lie."

Ratner declared that Timofyeyev lied when he maintained that the Party had openly admitted its negotiations with the Allies. Ratner himself was a member of the Moscow Bureau of the Central Committee at the time when Timofyeyev was carrying on these negotiations. In spite of that, however, he knew nothing

of the negotiations and could only infer that they were going on. Ratner stated that he was not naive and had never believed that one could admit a foreign army into Siberia and at the same time prevent this army from gaining political influence. When Zenzinov wrote from Samara in 1918 to the S. R. working in Soviet Russia that the Czech legionaries were perfect examples of a democratic army and that there was no danger from the Right elements, that was exactly the contrary of the truth. After the conference of February 8th, 1919, we believed that a new era had opened and that the S. R. had forever broken with the fight against two fronts and dealings with the Entente. But these resolutions were nothing but an expression of the weakness of the Party. In spite of these resolutions the Central Committee twisted the sense of these decisions of the conference and in its instructions promoted the development of *putschistic* elements in the Party and the participation of Party members in peasants' uprisings, etc. The Central Committee will deny this, but I maintain that the most active members of the Party took part in peasant uprisings under the influence of instructions from the Central Committee."

After Ratner had decided to join the Red Army and thus put into practise his personal fight against the reaction, Timofyeyev, member of the Central Committee, said to him, "If you do it in an inconspicuous way, we have nothing against it; but if you join the Red Army and do that as a political act, your expulsion from the Party is unavoidable."

After this statement of Timofyeyev Ratner preferred to leave the Party on his own initiative while other members of the Social Revolutionary Party were expelled from the Party for having recruited volunteers for the Red Army.

In conclusion Ratner said, "Most of us began our revolutionary activity in our youth. Many of us have served several years of hard labor in Siberia. We are mostly workers and are the weakest section of the Party. After this section left the Party, only the officialdom remained which, no doubt, merits the compliments of French diplomats but is good for nothing else. We do not understand high politics and are accustomed to act frankly. We despise all hypocrisy or action motivated by personal gain.

After Ratner's speech Ignatiev, another of the accused, made a statement in which he declared that he did not belong to the Social Revolutionary Party and had been a member of the Central Committee of the Party of Populist Socialists. "The crime with which I am charged are insignificant," stated Ignatiev. "What is of importance is the atmosphere in which they were committed. I realize from Timofyeyev's statement that what I had considered honest, open work was disreputable, double-dealing preparation of an armed struggle hand in hand with the Entente against the Soviet Power. We have been told that the leading group in the Social Revolutionary Party did not participate in intervention. Political honesty is necessary here and I therefore desire to state that the leading group in the Party did support intervention. It called upon the peasants to arise against the Soviet Power. Was my action political adventurousness? No! I acted in fullest agreement with the decisions of the Executive of the Social Revolutionary Party. The Social Revolutionary Party everywhere played the leading part in the struggle against the Soviet Power."

Thereupon the court was adjourned to Monday, June 12th.

Page 352

of

Vol. 2 No. 47

June 12, 1922

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MNS October 2021