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**Six Short Trials in Pravda (Translations)**

**"The Trial of Lenin," *Pravda*, April 22, 1920**

On April 17 the political unit and neighborhood organization of the Vindavo railway organized a trial of Lenin.

Nonparty members related with great interest to this new form of political conversation, and some 300 people came at the appointed time from different jobs despite the fact that it was the day before a holiday. The comrade communists who rought accusations against comrade Lenin and the Communist arty so entered into their prosecution roles and expressed their viewpoint that one could hardly be reproached for a superficial acquaintance with their program and that of their opponent. The following appeared as witnesses for the prosecution: a bourgeois [*burzhui*, an intensely derogatory term], a rich peasant [*kulak*], a speculator, a shirking worker, a deserter from the front, and a Menshevik who had just gotten out of the Butyrki prison. The defense's witnesses were a member of the German proletariat, a Russian worker, a soldier wounded in the tsar's war [World War I], and a woman worker. A prosecuting and defense attorney also spoke. The workers listened with bated breath. The acquittal of Lenin was met with a thunder of applause.

The usefulness of such trials is huge: everyone is sick of rallies, and not everyone is interested in lectures and [political] conversations. At the trial the audience is transformed from something dead which expresses its participation only in discussing and voting into something alive, and thinking. And in interesting nonparty members, the trials are also extremely useful for communists. In appearing as witnesses, defenders, and prosecutors, they learn to express their views not only in general phrases about the current moment but also in polemics which make them think seriously and deeply about the issues.

The trial of Lenin took place with great enthusiasm. As the workers left, they engaged in lively discussions of the issues which had been put before them.

It is suggested that the next trial be organized of a shirking worker.

**"A New Form of Agitation," *Pravda*, no. 262, November 21, 1920**

In one of the districts of the Sokol'nyi neighborhood a trial was staged of the Russian Communist Party for its October seizure of power. The Second International spoke as a prosecutor and the Third International as a defender. Other defense witnesses included a male/female worker, a male/female soldier, and Time; those for the prosecution consisted of Lloyd George, a rich peasant kulak, a speculator, a philistine member of the Russian bourgeoisie, and a Soviet lady. Among the nonparty [audience members] this trial aroused a great deal of interest. When they first put up the signs, workers asked if they could come, what kind of trial this was and so on. Three hundred people came to the trial, and there were more who wanted to get in than there was space in the building. Mostly they were nonparty railroad workers, soldiers, and women workers. They [the performers] had hastily rehearsed the trial one time, and not all the participants were ready. Nonetheless, the speeches were colorful. The audience listened with bated breath. Homeric laughter broke out in the hall at the evidence of the Russian bourgeoisie, a woman philistine, a

speculator, a Soviet lady. When the Third International as defender finished his speech by saying that the Russian Communist Party was the victor and victors must not be judged, the audience, consisting mainly of nonparty members, gave him a rousing ovation. With huge enthusiasm and unanimously the audience gave the Russian Communist Party an acquittal, and left singing revolutionary songs.

The Party and the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment must take this form of agitation extremely seriously. Roles must be written, participants must appear in costumes and be supplied with sets, and then trials will be replaced by theaters. Using prepared roles trials can be organized in the farthest corners which are poorest in agitators. One can write lively, interesting roles and in this way simplify the most complicated theoretical issues. Trials can be used for production propaganda, e.g.; the trial of railroad workers for failure to fulfill order No.1042. And what is even more important, in this political theater we don't have to resort to the assistance of alien actors. Male and female comrade workers become deeply penetrated with the sense of the issue under discussion and hence the types that they portray are so life-like, so in relief.

**"The Trial of the Soviet Authorities," Pravda, no. 287, December 21, 1920**

On December in the club of the Highest Military Chemical School a trial of the Soviet authorities [Sovetskaia vlast] was held on the grounds that they betrayed the principles of communism in publishing the decree on concessions.

The trial was prepared at the initiative of the party cell in the school and attracted interest both among the students and among the employees and Red Army soldiers. The students did all the organizational work themselves under the direction of the political education teacher. The court heard the testimony of witnesses who in a lively manner illuminated the issue from every side. The audience posed many questions from the hall based on newspaper announcements and philistine rumors. After hearing the speeches of the prosecutor and two defense attorneys, who opposed the charges brought, the court, in the persons of two students, one employee and two soldier-stablehands unanimously found Soviet power to be vindicated as having acted in the interests of the workers and peasants.

After the trial it became clear what importance such meetings on current issues have. Since the masses can listen in a concentrated way for long periods of time, the dramatization of a trial not only completely replaces a lecture but can be taken in in a much more lively way and can illuminate an issue much more fully.

The meeting lasted for four hours with the close attention of all those attending.

It is proposed that this "trial" be repeated at other courses as well.

**F.K., "Greetings to the New Year, " Pravda, no. 3, January 5, 1921**

The workers of the Bauman neighborhood welcomed in the new year in a novel way in their "May First Club." Instead of the usual speeches, the old man of 1920 appeared as the accused. A youth, the New Year, reads him the indictment. He accuses the year 1920 of having conducted a war when the people were incapacitated with exhaustion, of having put up roadblock detachments, and of having closed the Sukharev market. The Old Year proudly refuses a defender and in his final speech refutes all the charges.

"I can die in peace. With my rifle I have cleaned a way for you for peaceful construction," he says to the as yet inexperienced 1921.

The audience is lively, asking questions, bringing new accusations. The old man refutes them all brilliantly.

The court pronounces a sentence of acquittal.

And everyone willy-nilly mentally sums up the case of the old man and waits for the brave youth, the new year of great creativity and wishes that his life would go forward not under the thunder of gunfire, but under the blows of the hammer, the clank of the saw, and the whistle of countless locomotives.

**"A Dramatized Trial of Makhno," *Pravda*, no. 4 January 6, 1921**

Chernigov, Jan. 4. In the railway theater Konotopskii in the presence of several thousand workers and employees a trial was held of Makhno. The dramatization of the trial came off brilliantly. The prosecutors and defense held heated debates. The meeting resolved unanimously to apply the highest degree of punishment to Makhno for theft and murder of the population, for active assistance to the counterrevolutionaries Wrangel, Denikin, etc.

**"The Trial of Lenin and Trotsky," *Pravda* no. 33, Feb. 15, 1921**

Tambov. February 12. In the villages of Tengushov and Nalegov in Temnikovskii uezd, a trial was held of the proletarian leaders Lenin and Trotsky who were indicted for the outbreak of the civil war and the difficult position of the republic. Three hundred people were present at the trial. The court personnel included three communists and four nonparty members. After two hours of closing arguments all the articles of the indictment were overturned with an acquittal (ROSTA).