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Moscow Show Trials - III

Lead: The Moscow Show Trials in the 1930s were just the public feature of the Great Purge that eliminated all opposition in the Soviet Union to the totalitarian dictatorship of Joseph Stalin.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: The public trials were the outward display of a widespread elimination of potential dissidents from Soviet society. The secret police, under Stalin's personal direction, received the power of summary execution of anyone. This power was

essential because the evidence in the trials was pried from the prisoners by torture and intimidation. Old Bolsheviks such as Yevseyevich Zinovyev, Lev Kamenev and Nicholai Buhkarin were forced to confess, convicted of crimes they most certainly did not commit, and then executed. Yet the real damage to Soviet society was done in secret. Mensheviks, revolutionaries, foreign engineers, Trotskyites, parasites, spies were simply hauled out of their homes and shot. It was death by category, anyone who had a memory or dared to profess independent thought was eliminated. Then Stalin turned on the Red Army. When the generals refused to cooperate and confess he had them executed in the summer of 1937.

One of the remarkable aspects of these trials is that western observers including U.S. Ambassador Joseph Davies and *New York Times* Pulitzer Prize-winning Moscow correspondent Walter Duranty, accepted the trumped up charges without question. The Show Trials and the secret purges claimed millions of lives, filled the work camps of the Gulag in Siberia and stripped the Red Army of its best leadership. When Hitler attacked from the west in 1941, Soviet had already been decimated from within.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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