

From the archives of the Revolution

Speech on a personal note at an evening session of the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets

Leon Trotsky
22 June 2017

This is an account published in Nasha Zhizn' on June 19 (June 6, O.S.) of a speech delivered by Trotsky on June 18 (June 5, O.S.), 1917, at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets held in Petrograd. In it he addresses the slanders being spread by Kadet leader Pavel Miliukov and others that he and Lenin were agents of the German government. In the passage from Miliukov's speech that the editors of Trotsky's works included in the second note, both Lenin and Trotsky are accused of not only working for the German government, but of preaching "permanent revolution."

Trotsky cited a passage from Miliukov's speech that was given by the latter at a special meeting of the State Duma. In talking about Robert Grimm [1], Miliukov compared Lenin and Trotsky with Kolyshko [2]. Trotsky said:

"Miliukov accuses us of being hired agents of the German government. As I am speaking from this tribune of revolutionary democracy, I appeal to the honest Russian press (Trotsky turned to the journalists' table) with a request that my words be published: until Miliukov removes this charge against us, he will bear on his forehead the stamp of a dishonest slanderer."

Trotsky's declaration, delivered with force and dignity, met with a unanimous ovation from the entire audience. The whole Congress, regardless of factions, wildly applauded for several minutes.

Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), was the co-leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, socialist opponent of Joseph Stalin, founder of the Fourth International, and strategist of world socialist revolution.

"Nasha Zhizn'" [Our Life] N. 41,

June 6/19, 1917

Notes by the Editors of Trotsky's Works:

[1] Robert Grimm—leader of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party. During the war, Grimm actively participated in the Zimmerwald Conference, although he was essentially a pacifist, rather than a revolutionary. In 1917 Grimm came to Russia, evidently with the intention of taking an active part in concluding a peace between Russia and Germany, thereby "saving" the Russian Revolution. All the clamor raised by the bourgeois press stemmed from the following: in Petersburg Grimm received a telegram (seized by counter-intelligence) in which a member of the Swiss government, Hoffman, told Grimm about the beneficial prospects for Germany concerning the conclusion of a separate peace between Germany and Russia. This telegram was a reply to Grimm's query; as we noted, Grimm endeavored to serve as an intermediary between the warring countries. The bourgeois press raised a furious howl, accusing Grimm, and all the Zimmerwaldists along with him, of being German agents. Terrorized by all this, the Soviet leaders immediately sent Grimm abroad.

[2] The speech by Miliukov mentioned by comrade Trotsky was delivered by Miliukov at a private meeting of members of the State Duma on June 3 at Rodzianko's place, addressing foreign policy. In view of the fact that it was precisely from this moment on that the uncontrolled slander of leaders of the left Soviet opposition begins, directed in particular against Lenin and Trotsky, we are providing in full an excerpt from the aforementioned speech by Miliukov in which

he refers to comrade Trotsky:

Unfortunately, the provocative step of the Germans is not the only one: Germany seeks a separate peace not only at the front, in the trenches, it seeks one even in Russia. And here in Petrograd there suddenly appears the very chairman of the Zimmerwald conference, Robert Grimm, a figure very well known among all European Social-Democrats. I must say that in my capacity as minister I denied Robert Grimm entry into Russia, knowing that Robert Grimm is an agent of the German government. Today we read in the newspapers that Robert Grimm has been sent back across the border by the joint ministry with the participation of socialist-ministers. Only now did they learn that Robert Grimm is an agent of the German authorities, and that as an agent he is an intermediary, over the heads of the government, once again for the same issue—the question of a separate peace. There is still one more lamentable fact of the same kind. As you know, the rather famous writer Kolyshko was recently arrested; he has been writing under the name of Bayan and Serenky in various newspapers. His arrest has revealed unexpected things. It turns out that Mr. Kolyshko has been earning a great deal of German money by working for the removal from the first ministry the minister of war, Guchkov, and the minister of foreign affairs, Miliukov. Thus, the German activity is not limited to academic proposals for a separate peace. Highly energetic and purely practical work is being conducted. Working in parallel with the ideologists of Kienthal and Zimmerwald, the German agents are pursuing aims that are pleasing, on the one hand, to our extreme parties, and on the other hand, to the German government. We must add only one thing—our Provisional Government arrested Kolyshko and drove out Robert Grimm. But Lenin and Trotsky are once again preaching “permanent revolution,” and their comrades, having sinned quite enough against all the paragraphs of the criminal code, are at liberty

and are spreading their infection throughout Russian society and in the Russian army. I think that we must wish that our government be consistent and shift [their focus] from foreign and bourgeois agitators to socialist agitators, but of the same type. Let us wish that at some point Lenin, too, and his comrades are sent to the same place where Kolyshko now resides. (“Rech” [Speech], 4/17 June 1917).



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