

Stalin, J.W.

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1937: Speech Delivered by Comrade J. Stalin at a Meeting of Voters of the Stalin Electoral Area, Moscow

Documents from the Soviet Archives

1936: Letter to Kaganovich and Molotov

Stalin to Kaganovich and Molotov

[Pravda's mistakes on the trial of the Zinovievites and Trotskyites]

Written: September 6, 1936 (Sent from Sochi on 6 September at 4:05 a.m. (RGASPI, f. 558, op. II, d. 94, l. 31.))

First Published: The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence (1931-36); R.W. Davies, Annals of Communism series; Yale University Press © 2003. Note that the Russian version is 798 pages, while the English version is 431 pages.

Download the scanned PDF.

Source: Kremlin Archives, F. 558, op. II, d. 94, ll. 32-39.

Translated: Steven Shabad

Transcription/Markup: Brian Baggins

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Particularly, we wish to convey to readers that the above mentioned book has relevant material on the subject of the Moscow Trials, on pages 324-350.

Enclosed is a sample of such material.

[By cipher]

To Kaganovich, Molotov.

Pravda fell flat on its face with its articles about the trial of the Zinovievites and Trotskyites. Pravda failed to produce a single article that provided a Marxist explanation of the process of degradation of these scum, their sociopolitical complexion, and their real platform. It reduced everything to the personal element, to the notion that there are evil people who want to seize power and there are good people who hold power, and fed this paltry mush to the public.

The articles should have said that the struggle against Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov, Zhdanov, Kosior, and others is a struggle against the Soviets, a struggle against collectivization, against industrialization, a struggle, consequently, to restore capitalism in the towns and villages of the USSR. Because Stalin and the other leaders are not isolated individuals but the

personification of all the victories of socialism in the USSR, the personification of collectivization, industrialization, and the blossoming of culture in the USSR, consequently, the personification of the efforts of workers, peasants, and the working intelligentsia for the defeat of capitalism and the triumph of socialism.

They should have said that whoever fights against the party and the government in the USSR stands for the defeat of socialism and the restoration of capitalism.

They should have said that talk that the Zinovievites and Trotskyites have no platform is a fraud on the part of these scum and a self-deception by our comrades. These scum had a platform. The gist of their platform was the defeat of socialism in the USSR and the restoration of capitalism. It wasn't to these scum's advantage to talk openly about such a platform. Hence their claim that they don't have a platform, which our bumlbers took at face value.

They should have said, finally, that the degradation of these scum to the level of White Guards and fascists is a logical outgrowth of their moral decline as opposition leaders in the past. As far back as the X party congress, Lenin said that if a faction or factions persist in their errors in their struggle against the party, under the Soviet system they will, without fail, slide down to the level of White Guardism, the defense of capitalism, a struggle against the Soviets, and must, without fail, merge with the enemies of Soviet rule. This proposition by Lenin has now been brilliantly confirmed. But Pravda, unfortunately, failed to make use of it. That is the spirit and direction in which agitation should have been conducted in the press. All this unfortunately has been missed.

Stalin.

Nos. 29 and 30

6 September 1936

1937: On Applying Physical Pressure to Prisoners

[On Applying Physical Pressure to Prisoners]

Written: 10 January 1939

First Published:

Source: RGASPI, f. 1, op. 58, d. 6, ll. 145-146.

Translated: from the Russian Dr. Mark Kramer, Harvard University. *

Transcription/Markup: B. Baggins

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To the Secretaries of oblast and regional party committees,
To the CCs of national Communist parties,
To the people's commissars of internal affairs,
and to the heads of NKVD directorates

It has become known to the VKP CC that the secretaries of oblast and regional party committees, in checking up on employees of NKVD directorates, have laid blame on them for the use of physical pressure against those who have been arrested, treating it as something criminal. The VKP CC affirms that the use of physical pressure in the work of the NKVD has been permitted since 1937 in accordance with a resolution of the VKP CC. This directive indicated that physical pressure was to be used in exceptional cases and only against blatant enemies of the people who, when interrogated by humane methods, defiantly refuse to turn over the names of co-conspirators, and who refuse for months on end to provide any evidence, and who try to thwart the unmasking of co-conspirators who are still at large, and who thereby continue even from prison to wage a struggle against the Soviet regime. Experience has shown that such an arrangement has produced good results and has greatly expedited the unmasking of enemies of the people. True, subsequently in practice the method of physical pressure was abused by Zakovsky, Litvin, Uspensky, and other scoundrels, converting it from an exception into a rule and beginning to apply it against honest people who had been arrested accidentally. For these abuses, they [the scoundrels] have been given due punishment. But this in no way detracts from the value of the method itself when it is properly used. It is known that all bourgeois secret services use physical pressure against representatives of the socialist proletariat and rely on especially savage methods of it. We might therefore ask why a socialist secret service should be any more more humane in relation to inveterate agent of the bourgeoisie and sworn enemies of the working class and collectivized farmers. The VKP CC believes that the use of physical pressure must absolutely be continued from here on in exceptional cases and against blatant and invidious enemies of the people, and that this is a perfectly appropriate and desirable method. The VKP CC demands that the secretaries of oblast and regional party committees and the CCs of national party committees bear in mind this explanation when they check up on the employees of NKVD directorates.

Secretary of the VKP CC

J. Stalin

10.1.1939

* The veracity of this translation is disputed. An alternate translation is offered by Grover Furr and reproduced here with his permission:

BY CODE CC VKP(b)

TO THE SECRETARIES OF OBLAST AND REGIONAL PARTY
COMMITTEES, CCS OF NATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTIES, PEOPLE'S
COMMISSARS OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, HEADS OF NKVD
DIRECTORATES

The CC [Central Committee] of the VKP [All-Union Communist Party] has learned that in checking up on employees of NKVD directorates secretaries of oblast and regional party committees have blamed them for using physical pressure against persons who have been arrested, as something criminal. The CC of the VKP explains that use of physical pressure in the practice of the NKVD has been permitted since 1937 in accordance with permission of the CC of the VKP. At the same time it was stated that physical pressure is permitted as an exception and, in addition, only in relation to blatant enemies of the people who, taking advantage of the humane method of interrogation, stubbornly refuse to give up their co-conspirators; who refuse to confess for months; and who strive to slow down the discovery of conspirators who are still at large; and so continue their struggle against Soviet power even from prison. Experience has shown that this policy has produced results by greatly speeding up the exposure of enemies of the people. It is true that subsequently in practice the method of physical pressure was sullied by the scum Zakovsky, Litvin, Uspensky, and others, because they turned it from an exception into a rule and employed it against honest people who had been accidentally arrested. For these abuses, they have been duly punished. But this does not invalidate the method itself, insofar as it is employed correctly in practice. It is well known that all bourgeois intelligence services use physical pressure against representatives of the socialist proletariat and in its most disgraceful forms at that. One wonders why a socialist intelligence service is obliged to be humane in relation to inveterate agents of the bourgeoisie and implacable enemies of the working class and collective farmers. The CC of the VKP considers that the method of physical pressure must necessarily be continued in future in exceptional cases in relation to manifest and unrepentant enemies of the people, as a completely correct and expedient method. The CC of the VKP demands that the secretaries of oblast and regional committees [and] of the CCs of national communist party [evidently a misprint for "parties" - GF] act in accordance with this clarification when checking up on employees of the NKVD.

SECRETARY OF THE CC VKP(b) I. STALIN [typed, not signed- GF]

[Dated by hand - GF] 10/I.-39 g. 15 hrs]

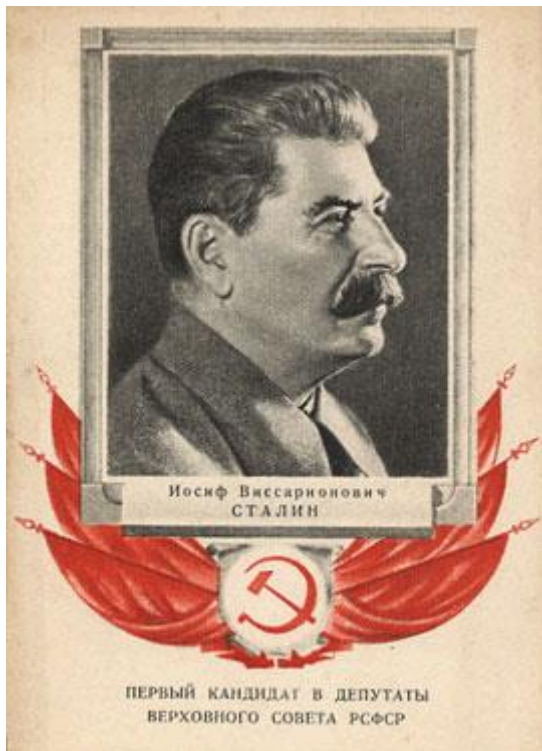
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Dr. Furr expounds upon the controversy surrounding the authenticity of the so-called "torture telegram" in his 2011 book *Khrushchev Lied*,— pp. 79-83 and pp. 333-337.

—Mike B., Stalin Archive Administrator, 2013.

**Speech Delivered by Comrade J. Stalin
at a Meeting of Voters of the
Stalin Electoral Area, Moscow**
Text (English) | Audio (Russian)

Notes on this document



poster one

Propaganda poster for the 1937 election

It may come as a surprise to many that Soviet Communist Party leader Iosif Stalin ran campaigns for electoral political office in the USSR — not once but twice. Not surprisingly, Stalin won both times. The document here is the text of Stalin's one and only "stump speech" from his first electoral "race." The institution to which Stalin aspired was the Supreme Soviet, a large bicameral parliament created by the so-called "Stalin Constitution" of 1936.

From the early 1930s the Soviet Union's calculated and systematic leadership cult was in full swing. Official ideology proclaimed the achievement of socialism to be at hand and a modification of the political superstructure in the form of expanded socialist democracy was deemed by the party officialdom to be the order of the day. Competitive races were strongly hinted at. Even the

Great Stalin would run for office, it was declared. This is not to say that Stalin's race would be anything other than a formulaic pre-ordained vote of confidence, a plan made readily apparent when it was announced that Stalin had been nominated by each of the 3,346 electoral districts as their desired deputy. As Stalin could stand for election in only one precinct, the central Moscow district, already deemed to be the "Stalin Electoral District," was chosen, for reasons which seem apparent.

During the first part of December, the top leaders of the Soviet state had each made their own public speeches in the nation's capital as part of the electoral festivities. On Saturday night, December 11, 1937, it was at last the supreme leader's turn. A "special meeting" was held in the ornate Bolshoi Theater with Nikita Sergeivich Khrushchev, head of the Moscow party organization, serving as chairman. Preliminary speeches of nomination were made by two factory workers, a doctor, a teacher, and a housewife while top party leaders sat in the audience and applauded these modest oratorical efforts by these chosen representatives of the masses.¹ Called to the rostrum to speak by Khrushchev, Stalin was met by an extended ovation punctuated by what seems to have been premeditated shouts of adulation. Clad in his trademarked khaki tunic, Stalin delivered a rather sedate and at times folksy 25 minute address to the carefully selected throng of "electors," a speech interrupted some 30 times by applause. The speech was almost certainly broadcast by radio and was recorded and reproduced as a set of five 78 rpm records. The text of this "Speech Delivered at a Meeting of Voters of the Stalin Electoral Area" was quickly published in Moscow in pamphlet form. An English translation soon followed, produced by the main state publishing house under the imprint of the "Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR."



poster two

Strangely, this speech was never published in pamphlet form by the Communist Party of the United States, nor by the CPGB in the UK. This situation was doubly peculiar given that this was one of only a tiny handful of speeches delivered by Stalin after 1936. Lest conspiracy theory creep in, scholars should be advised that the speech was in no way "secret" from CPUSA and CPGB members, as it appeared in the daily party press and as the lead article in the January 1938 issue of the Comintern's widely circulated theoretical magazine, *The Communist International*.

Yet, further publication of the 1937 Election Speech remained extremely sporadic. The speech was not included in any edition of Stalin's selected works, nor in Stalin's collected works.² Indeed, Stalin's 1937 election speech was only officially published in English by either the Soviet government or the Anglo-American communist movement one other time, as the second part of a Moscow-issued booklet headed by Stalin's 1946 electoral speech. The text of this later edition was expurgated to conveniently omit Stalin's tip of the hat to Nikolai Ezhov, former head of the secret police who was shot as an "enemy of the people" on Feb. 4, 1940, after 300 days of investigative incarceration. Scholars should be advised that it does not necessarily follow that this "misstep" in Stalin's 1937 oration was the cause of the omission of this speech from the definitive 11th Russian Edition of Stalin's selected works in 1939.

Notes prepared by
Tim Davenport

Corvallis, OR
May 22, 2007

1. Pravda, Dec. 12, 1937, cited in Robert McNeal, *Stalin: Man and Ruler*. (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1988), pg. 208.

2. Stalin's selected works was variously titled in English as *Problems of Leninism*, *Leninism*, and *Selected Writings* and was based on the 1939 "11th Russian Edition" and reissued numerous times from 1940 through 1954. Stalin's (very incomplete) *Sochineniia/Works* project was abruptly terminated in Russian in 1952 and in English translation in 1955, halting with volume 13, covering material published through January 1934.